UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Abused Women's Experience with the Justice System: Concept Mapping

by

Susan R. Ludwig ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall, 1996

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ISBN 0-612-18069-7

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DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

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TO THE COURAGEOUS WOMEN WHO SHARED THEIR STORIES

Abstract

The majority of research on abused women's experiences with the justice system has been conducted by advocates within the system seeking reform. This research typically has included both samples of justice officials as well as abused women. Usually predetermined surveys and interview schedules have been utilized. Research on how abused women cope with these experiences is limited. In this study concept mapping, a method which combines both qualitative and quantitative strategies, was used to identify and categorize the experiences or issues that abused women have had with the justice system and their ways of coping. The study consisted of two phases. In phase one semi-structured interviews, a focus group and a written format were used to gather information from abused women who attend groups for support. Ninety-eight issues and experiences with the justice system, and 59 different ways of coping with these experiences were identified. The data was sorted and named by the abused women. It was then analyzed using multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis to produce two concept maps that resulted in ten and six themes. The themes identified by the women regarding issues and experiences were: minimizing the seriousness of wife assault by courts; the courts encourage continued abuse; problems with lawyers; victims through the legal system; continued financial abuse; lack of support, information and resources; child issues, custody issues and calls for assistance; failure to serve and protect; maintenance enforcement/child support; and effective/ineffective community services. The themes identified by the women regarding coping were: escape/reference to children's coping; seeking protection/effects of stress; struggling to stay sane; helplessness/giving up; coping through other resources and professionals; and seeking information/mending. In phase two, a

survey was distributed to agencies and organizations that assist abused women to determine the prevalence and variation of the issues/experiences and coping strategies. The women surveyed experienced similiar issues. They indicated they had difficulty coping with the justice system. The results of this research could serve as the basis for developing counselling strategies for abused women to help them cope with their experiences with the justice system.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to my dissertation advisor, Dr. Peter Calder, for his support, direction, and insight as this study progressed. I also extend my gratitude to the remaining members of my committee for their helpful advice, Dr. Anne Neufeld, Dr. Dick Sobsey, Dr. Rob Short, Dr. Olive Yonge, and Dr. Chris Bagley.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the women who are members of the Edmonton Support and Advocacy Association for Abused Women. Without their help and stories this research would not have been possible. Thanks also to the women in the drop-in group in Fort Saskatchewan who made me feel welcome and shared their stories with me. I would also like to acknowledge the members of the Edmonton Council Against Family Violence. The contacts and insights I received from committee members were valuable to this study and for my personal and profession development. Particular thanks to Derwyn Whitbread and Shirley Yakimishyn who steered me in the right direction for the contacts needed for this research.

The unfolding of this work was made easier by the ongoing support, patience and encouragement of particular women who over the past three years have shown me what it means to be courageous. Carol, Diane, Deb, Maaike, Suzanne, Pat, and Nicole--thank-you for being my friends and my teachers.

Finally, thanks to my husband, Peter. Without his continued support and belief in me I could not have completed my work. Thanks also to my mother who assisted with the first draft.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

During the last decade the justice system has undergone reform in the recognition and protection of abused women's needs (Alberta Law Reform Institute, 1995; Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family, 1993; Macleod, 1987, 1989; Macleod & Picard, 1989; Mahon, 1988; Reimer, 1992). The limited research available demonstrates that despite expanded and improved legal services for abused women, many of these women still do not seriously consider using the justice system (Macleod, 1989). Many women continue to find the justice system coercive and unresponsive to their needs (Alberta Law Reform Institute, 1995; Macleod, 1987; Reimer, 1992). The psychological effects of spousal violence have been well documented and include depression, lowered ego strength, lower self-esteem, anxiety, helplessness and hopelessness (Aguilar & Nightengale, 1994; Campbell & Parker, 1992; Kemp, Green, Hovanitz & Rawlings, 1995). Already in emotional turmoil, these women face legal battles in a system that adds to their stress and sense of helplessness (Edmonton Police Services & Community and Family Services, 1992; Macleod, 1989; Marshall, 1993).

The research on abused women's experiences with the justice system and their ability to cope is not extensive. Literature to date indicates that abused women face many obstacles in the justice system that contribute to negative psychological effects. These obstacles include threats by the abuser toward the woman to pressure her to drop the charges, ongoing harassment by the abuser, delays in court hearings and other legal proceedings, unresponsiveness of police services, high legal costs, vague restraining orders that are difficult to enforce and minimal consequences to the abuser (Alberta Law Reform Institute, 1995; Edmonton Police Services and Community and Family Services, 1992; Macleod, 1989, 1995; Macleod & Picard, 1989; Reimer, 1992). A general lack of understanding of abused women's experience by crown prosecutors and judges has also been documented (Edmonton Police Services and Community and Family Services, 1992; Mahon, 1988; Macleod & Picard, 1989; Reimer, 1992). Mahon (1988) notes that we do not understand the consequences of physical and emotional violence within the relationship, after the woman leaves, or the impact of the justice system on these women or their children.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the experiences abused women have with the justice system in Alberta, and how they coped. The study is approached from an emic perspective; that is, from the native's point of view (Morse & Field, 1995). Concept mapping, a research strategy that combines qualitative and quantitative strategies was utilized to answer the following: (1) What issues/experiences do abused women experience with the justice system? (2) How do they cope with their experiences with the justice system? (3) What is the prevalence of these experiences in a larger sample of abused women?

It is hoped that the results of this investigation will be useful for professionals who are counselling and supporting abused women so that these women can learn to cope more effectively with the legal process. Even though recent research has begun to explicate the plight of abused women's experiences with the justice system, we do not yet fully understand the difficulties they face, or how they cope with these difficulties. An indepth understanding of the issues and how abused women cope would result in a more sensitive and informed response. It is hoped that the results of this study will also be useful to officials (police, lawyers and judges) of the justice system.

Significance of the Study

Spousal assault is a major source of fear, injury and even death for women in this country. In 1993 Statistics Canada conducted a major national survey on violence against women (Rodgers, 1994). A random sample of 12,300 women responded across the ten provinces. Results indicated that 24 percent of women living with or married to their partner have been assaulted at some point in the relationship. Alberta and British Columbia had the highest rates of wife assault. One-third of the respondents at some time feared for their lives. Injuries were reported by 45 percent of the women during assault by a marital partner. Medical attention was required by 40 percent of these women. Results also indicated that abuse sometimes occurred during pregnancy (20%). In almost

10 percent the abuse began during pregnancy. Finally, 20 percent of the respondents reported that the assaults occurred during or after separation, or increased in severity at these times (Rodgers, 1994).

The psychological effects that were reported from the abuse included anger, fear, loss of trust, lower self-esteem, depression, anxiety, feelings of shame and guilt, and ongoing problems with male relationships. The women coped in a variety of ways including using alcohol, illegal drugs and medication. Rodgers (1994) found that 43 percent had left temporarily or permanently. The common reasons for leaving were fear for their lives (57%) and their children witnessing the violence (60%).

In only 26 percent of the wife assault cases were police informed. The women were more likely to contact the police if the children had witnessed the violence, if injury occurred, if a weapon was used, or if the abuse was repeated or ongoing. One-half of the respondents were satisfied with the police response. The police responded to 84 percent of the cases reported to them, but laid charges in only 28 percent of these cases. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of these women felt the police should have been more supportive. Twenty percent (20%) felt the police should have laid charges against the abuser; just under ten percent (10%) felt the police should have responded more quickely or referred them to another service (Rodgers, 1994). The women reported they did not call the police because they considered the incident too minor (52%), they wanted privacy (10%), did not want help (19%), did not want to get involved with the legal system (9%), they feared retaliation by the offender (8%), and they believed that there was nothing the police could do to help (7%). In this survey, 22 percent of women had told no one else about the abuse prior to responding to the survey.

In another report by Statistics Canada (Wilson & Daly, 1994) spousal homicide rates were reported in Canada between 1974 and 1992. Wilson and Daly reported that "3.2 women have been killed by their husbands for each man killed by his wife" (p.1). They reported women in abusive relationships were nine times as likely to be killed by their spouses than by a stranger. Separation from the abusive relationship increased the risk of death six-fold.

Statistics from other populations such as disabled women and aboriginal women indicate these groups experience slightly higher rates of spousal abuse. Sobsey (1988) reported that 39 percent of disabled women who were married or cohabituating experienced abuse (compared to 29 percent reported by Statistics Canada for the total female population). Frank (1992) reports that one out of three aboriginal women are abused by her partner. This is comparable to 3 out of 10 found in the Violence Against Women Survey for the total Canadian female population.

The common theme in these surveys is the high prevalence rate of male violence against their spouses or common-law partners. Brown (1993) points out that statistics on family violence collected through such surveys likely underrepresents actual incidence rates. Typically, samples in such surveys do not include statistics on women who fall in these categories: very poor, nonEnglish speaking, infirmed, homeless, or incarcerated women.

Rodgers (1994) in the Violence Against Women Survey noted that 43 percent of the women left the relationship for at least for a short time, 57 percent did not. She also noted that almost 75 percent of the women who left the relationship eventually returned home. Various reasons have been proposed to account for this phenomenon. Walker (1977-78, 1979, 1989) proposed that one of the reasons the women stay is due to learned helplessness. Others have criticized the concept of learned helplessness because it ignores the reality of social forces such as inadequate resources, increased risk and inability to achieve safety, inadequate community resources and ineffective legal response (Fineman & Mykitiuk, 1994; Johann, 1994; Koss et al., 1994; Pagelow, 1984). One of the most distressing forces is the lack of an effective legal response (Alberta Law Reform Institute, 1995; Canadian Institute for Law and the Family, 1993; Edmonton Police Services & Community and Family Services, 1992; Jaffer et al., 1992). Marcus (1994) believes our current legal system "is a system devoted to maintaining control over women" (p. 18). Walker (1989) noted that abused women fail to accept help from social agencies, including the justice system because they believe such help will be ineffective. Jacobson (1982) felt that the problems abused women face with the response of the legal system contribute to a sense of helplessness and powerlessness.

> In many cases leaving is not easy-they have few resources to change or leave the relationship. The lack of adequate protection has repeatedly been identified as a central problem facing battered women. Many women described being afraid to seek help from the police or legal system because 'it wouldn't do any good'. (p. 7).

The psychological effects that can occur when a woman seeks help from the justice system have been described by Macleod (1987). According to Macleod, when a battered woman turns to others for help, she often experiences a "secondary victimization". She may also be feeling guilty or insane and "feeling dejected, rejected and without hope" (p. 31).

Most of the studies documenting the difficulties that abused women face with the justice system have been conducted by professionals within the justice system. Their primary focus has been reformation of the justice system. The negative psychological effects and coping responses were reported to demonstrate the existence of an ineffective system. Participants in these studies have included justice officials, academics, professionals working with abused women, and abused women themselves telling their own stories. This study derives its data solely from the abused women. The focus of the study includes not only their experiences with the justice system, but also their coping responses to these experiences. Efforts were made to ensure the issues, experiences and coping responses were presented from the womens' perspective. Abused women were involved at every stage of this research beginning with the collection of the data, sorting of the data, naming of the themes and developing of the survey.

Statement of the Problem

Recent research has begun to document abused women's experiences with the justice system. The bulk of this research, however, has been conducted to demonstrate the need for reformation of an ineffective judicial system. It has been documented that the psychological distress resulting from these women's experiences with the justice system is high and may contribute to the woman's eventual return to the abusive relationship. There is limited research on how these women cope with this experience. Those involved in counselling and supporting abused women will undoubtedly need to provide counselling as the women face the justice system. We need to know what types of issues these women face and how they cope. Results from this type of investigation should begin to enlighten us in these areas.

Concept Mapping Method

Concept mapping is a statistical method that was introduced by Trochim in 1989. It is a method that includes both qualitative and quantitative analysis. It is used to cluster variables into their underlying themes. Daughtry and Kunkel (1991) suggested that it is "particulary appropriate for applications in which researchers are seeking to clarify the domain, constituent elements, and underlying structures of a phenomena as experienced within the population of interest" (p. 317). It is a method used to analyze qualitative data in an objective way (Kunkel, 1991).

Concept mapping also allows for the study of constructs as they are experienced by the participants, rather than on some *a priori-based* formulation (Daughtry & Kunkel, 1991). The concept maps produced from responses of abused women's experiences with the justice system and the coping responses may help counsellors in their understanding and sensitivity for the women they are counselling. The concept maps may also be useful for officials of the justice system. Finally, the concept maps can provide direction for future research.

Delimitations of the Study

Certain delimiting factors exist which make it difficult to gain an entirely clear perspective of the experiences abused women have with the justice system and their coping responses. One of these factors is gaining access. It is relatively easy to access these women once they have contacted and utilized a social service agency. It is more difficult to contact women who have not sought any community support or who have successfully extricated themselves from abusive relationships. Rodgers (1994) in the Violence Against Women Survey noted that only 24 percent of the respondents had used a social service. Most studies of assaulted women have been based on samples drawn from police records, court records, and shelters (Health and Welfare Canada, 1989; Macleod, 1987). Another delimiting factor is that it is difficult to interview women who do not speak or read English.

The initial sample used in this study to create the concept maps were abused women from support groups and counselling centres in Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan. The sample included immigrant women and native women, rural and urban women, and women who were in varying stages of the abusive relationship (ie; those in the initial stages of contact with justice officials to those who had successfully extricated themselves from the abusive relationship). It was not a random sample. All of the women in this study had, or were currently receiving, some form of counselling and support. Non-English speaking women were not included in the sample. Disabled women were only included if they attended one of the agencies.

Another limitation is that the concept maps were developed from the respondent's statements. That is, the maps were developed from the perceived experiences of the women. No attempt to seek collaboration from other sources was made. The survey was developed using statements derived from the concept mapping stage. These statements were presented in the women's venacular. Respondents to the survey items may not have indicated that certain items were applicable because of the specifity of the content.

Definition of Abused Woman

The term "abused woman" was chosen for this study to encompass all types of abuse: emotional, physical, psychological, spiritual and financial. The term "battered" woman not chosen because some may view it as physical abuse alone. It may appear biased to focus on women as the victims and males as the perpetrators, however as reported by the Edmonton Police Services , approximately 94 percent of spousal assault is committed by men against women (personal communication, Dave Bell, Spousal Violence Follow-up Teams, February, 1996). For this reason abused women were the focus of this study.

Definition of Justice System

The term "justice system" was chosen to encompass any aspect that the women may encounter in their legal proceedings. These aspects may include interactions with police, lawyers, judges or crown prosecutors. The women may also interact with social workers (ie: child welfare workers), psychologists (ie: for home studies), or other professionals required for court proceedings. The professionals that the women encountered during legal proceedings were included in the women's recorded experience with the justice system.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Marshall *et al* (1993) wrote; "Some women have come to believe that they are somehow responsible for the violence. Their self-esteem is so eroded that they consider themselves failures for not achieving the 'domestic bliss' for which women are held responsible" (p. 10). Research on abused women's experience with the justice system indicates that their response to these experiences cannot be separated from the emotional effects of living in an abusive relationship. The women's ability to cope and the psychological effects of their experiences are enmeshed with those that necessitated them to turn to the justice system in the first place. Some writers have suggested that, in part, an effective legal response to these women depends on their ability to appear emotionally stable to assert themselves (Alberta Law Reform Institute, 1995; Boyd, 1985). Many of these women, however, have suffered such psychological distress due to the abusive relationship, that it is difficult to assert themselves. The review of the literature will therefore first focus on the psychological effects of living in a violent or abusive relationship. This will be followed by a review of research on abused women's experiences with the justice system. Finally, a review of the literature on concept mapping will be presented.

Psychological Effects Arising from the Abusive Relationship

Self-esteem in Abused Women

Low self-esteem is a common characteristic of abused women (Aguilar & Nightengale, 1994; Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992; Walker, 1989). Interviews by Walker (1979) were among the first to document low self-esteem in abused women. Since then, empirical investigations in this area have documented the presence of this construct in abused women. Whether or not a low self-esteem is present prior to the relationship and increases the likelihood of being targets for battering relationships, or whether the battering relationship causes low self-esteem is not entirely clear. Aguilar and Nightingale (1994) note that "what is clear, however, is that low self-esteem (whatever the cause) may contribute to the difficulty many women have in leaving the battering relationships" (p. 35). Termination of such a relationship requires strength and changes that women with low self-esteem may not feel they have or can accomplish. Self-esteem in abused women thus becomes important to understand as a construct, not only while the women remain in the relationship, but also as they terminate the relationship and need to face the justice system. Empirical studies of the self-esteem of abused women will be presented in this section.

Aguilar and Nightingale (1994) examined the self-esteem of 48 battered women and 48 nonbattered women. They designed a questionnaire that included the Barksdale Self-Esteem Evaluation (1972) and questions concerning the types of battering experienced. Women in the nonbattered group were excluded if they endorsed any of the 12 questions that directly addressed physical forms of abuse. An analysis of variance revealed that the battered women had significantly lower self-esteem than the nonbattered women.

Dutton and Painter (1993) used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) to assess the self-esteem in 50 battered women and 25 emotionally abused women who had recently left their relationships. No control group was utilized. They found that low self-esteem scores were expressed by all the women and that this formed a syndrome with trauma symptoms that lasted at least six months. They suggested that the power imbalance in the relationship was one factor that contributed to the low self-esteem.

Cascardi and O'Leary (1992) examined self-esteem in 33 battered women currently in a relationship who sought counselling or support services in a community agency in Nassau County. The purpose of the study was to assess the incidence and magnitude of depression and poor self-esteem in their sample. They also sought to examine the association between depression and self-esteem with the frequency, severity and consequences of physical aggression. They used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale to measure self-esteem. They stated that the battering appeared to have a greater influence on self-esteem than on depression. They also found that as the number, form and consequences of physical aggression increased, the women's depressive symptoms increased and self-esteem decreased.

Tutty, Bidgood and Rothery (1993) examined the self-esteem of battered women prior to and after group therapy. Their sample included 89 women from twelve support groups run through three agencies. They used the Coppersmith Self-Esteem Inventory. This measure was given to all 89 women prior to group therapy. In a six month follow-up measure 32 women completed it again. The average score for the participants prior to attending the groups was 47.6 and falls "far below the mean for the female adult population" (p. 335) which is 71.7. After six months the average score for the 32 women who were available for follow-up was 61.6, still below the normal range. The researchers noted that follow-up scores needed to be interpreted cautiously because the 32 women who were available for follow-up measures were those who "benefitted the most from the support groups on three of the outcome criteria" (p. 339). The result that self-esteem continues to be affected after six months is consistent with that found by Dutton and Painter (1993).

Herbert, Silver and Ellard (1991) set out to identify psychological factors involved in coping with an abusive relationship. Their questionnaire examined factors such as attributions and self esteem in women who had left the relationship and in those who had remained in the relationship. They note that low self-esteem along with other psychological factors are thought to "trap" the woman in the relationship. The implicit assumption that follows from this is that once the woman leaves the relationship her self-esteem and over-all psychological well-being would improve. The results from their study do not support this assumption. Simply leaving an abusive relationship does not improve psychological adjustment. The researchers suggest that one might account for the continued low self-esteem by the length and severity of abuse. Verbal abuse, in particular, might contribute to the continued psychological impact on the women.

It can be concluded that the research indicates that the self-esteem of abused women does suffer. Loss of self-esteem due to the abuse does not end with the end of the relationship. So far, research has documented that even after six months low self-esteem still exists. It is during this time that these women are likely to begin legal proceedings against their abuser. It is therefore valuable knowledge for those involved in counselling to recognize that these women face an adversarial system at a time then their self-esteem is still eroded.

Depression in Abused Women

There is limited data on the prevalence of depression among abused women (Sato & Heiby, 1992). The data that is available has been largely clinical and is affected by unstandardized measures and small sample sizes. Results of studies available consistently indicate a high incidence of depression in abused women (Rodgers, 1993; Rosewater, 1988; Rounsaville & Lifton, 1983; Walker, 1989). Sato and Heiby (1992) state that "dysphoria and decreased activity level may...attenuate motivation to leave a battering relationship" (p.231). Given that depression does exist in abused women at an apparently high level, and that the presence of depression may affect their ability to leave an abusive relationship, one could also assume that depression may affect the women's ability to cope with the legal process. It is therefore important to examine the research on depression in abused women. Empirical studies will be presented in this section.

Walker (1979) was one of the first to describe depression in abused women. She interviewed over 400 battered women. No comparison group and no standardized measures were used. More recent investigations have continued to document the presence of depression in these women. Christopoulus *et al* (1987) compared 40 abused women in a shelter with 40 women in a control group. Abused women were found to be more distressed on a number of measures including the Beck Depression Inventory. Cascardi and O"Leary (1992) did not include a control group, but found that 70 percent of the abused women in their study scored greater that 14 on the Beck Depression Inventory and of these, 52 percent scored over 20 on this measure. A score of 20 reflects a severe level of depressive symptomatology. They noted that "as the number, form, and consequences of physically aggressive acts increased and/or worsened, the woman's depressive symptoms increased" (p. 249).

Kerovac, Taggart, Lescop and Fortin (1986) studied 130 abused women in a shelter. They used the SCL-90R Symptom Checklist to measure the women's psychological health. They compared results to 170 nonbattered women and found the battered women scored higher on all dimensions. On every item of the depression scale, the scores of the battered women were higher than those of women in the control group.

Gelles and Harrop (1989) interviewed 3,002 women from the Second National Family Violence Survey conducted by Gelles and Straus in 1988. Eleven point three percent (11.3%) of these females had experienced minor violence, and five percent (5%) had experienced severe violence. The Psychiatric Evaluation Research Interview was used to measure depressive and somatic symptomatology. They reported that the women from abusive and violent relationships reported high levels of moderate and severe psychological distress.

Sato and Heiby (1992) set out to identify correlates of depressive symptoms among battered women. Their sample consisted of 136 battered women who were given a 26 page questionnaire to complete. They used the Zung's Self-Rating Depression Scale to measure depressive symptoms. Those who scored greater than 50 on this measure were classified as depressed (according to the recommended cut-off for clinical depression by Zung). This measure was used because it was "more culturally relevant" for the populations studied (p. 233). They reported that 47 percent of the women endorsed items that placed them in the clinically depressed category. Four variables were found to be uniquely associated with depressive symptoms. These included a history of depression, realistic assessment, deficient self-reinforcement, and loss of sources of potential reinforcement. Physical abuse and negative self-blame did not contribute significantly to depression.

Rounsaville and Lifton (1983) used the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) and found that 80 percent of 31 battered women in their sample were depressed. These depressive symptoms have been described by other researchers as "dysfunctional, potentially life-threatening, and potentially vulnerability-enhancing for battered women" (Sato & Heiby, 1992, p. 230). Suicidal ideation and attempts increase in battered women who suffer from depression. Pagelow (1984) reported that 50 percent of a sample of 273 battered women had contemplated suicide, and 23 percent of these had attempted suicide.

The research indicates that the prevalence of depressive symptoms in abused women is high. What is not evident, however, is the effect that depression has on the women's ability to effectively extricate themselves from an abusive relationship. Sato and Heiby (1992) write that "the perceived negative consequences of leaving the relationship may appear ominously magnified when experiencing symptoms such as poor self-esteem, insomnia, weight loss and fatigue" (p.231). It is just as likely that the presence of depression in abused women affects their ability to cope with stressful experiences with the justice system. The stress caused by such an experience may also appear "ominously magnified" (p. 231).

Learned Helplessness

Walker (1979) was the first person to propose that abused women experience learned helplessness, and that this construct might help explain why these women do not leave an abusive relationship. She (1977-78) noted that within an abusive relationship a cycle of violence occurs, and as this cycle repeats, the battered woman begins to feel powerless. She feels she cannot control or influence what happens to her. Walker (1979) states: "Once the women are operating from a belief of helplessness, the perception becomes the reality and they become passive, submissive, 'helpless'. They allow things that appear to them to be out of control to actually get out of control" (p. 47). In this way, battered women become unaware that they have options. "Women who have learned to expect battering as a way of life have learned that they cannot control its occurrence" (Walker, 1979, p. 48). This syndrome results in psychological paralysis. It helps to explain why the woman does not leave the abusive relationship. According to Walker, learned helplessness provides a "psychological rationale for why the battered woman becomes a victim, and how the process of victimization further entraps her, resulting in psychological paralysis to leave the relationship" (Walker, 1977-78, p. 525).

Walker (1979) and Hendricks-Matthews (1982) suggested that learned helplessness in abused women contribute to their entrapment in the abusive relationship. They blame themselves for the attacks. Acrlisle-Frank (1991) felt that abused women might believe they can control the violence but have no control over the ability to escape. Walker (1989) noted that when abused women attribute the cause of the abuse to be beyond their control are especially prone to feel helpless and depressed.

A number of researchers have documented psychological constructs in line with the learned helplessness theory. Kuhl (1984) investigated the personality structure of battered women and found that the women were "cautious, try to avoid confrontations, feel inadequate in coping with stress and trauma, tend to retreat into fantasy and are dissatisfied with their current status" (p. 460). Gellen, Hoffman, Jones and Stone (1984) administered the MMPI to 10 battered women and concluded that "the syndrome reflected...suggests elements of a personality profile that are similar to the construct of learned helplessness" (p. 603). Finn (1985) and Hodgson (1982) both looked at abused women's coping strategies. They found that these women were less apt to use active coping strategies such as obtaining social support, reframing stressful events and seeking spiritual support. They also found these women were more apt to use passive coping strategies such as fantasizing. While these findings may be interpreted to be consistent with learned helplessness behaviors in the average person, Walker (1984) noted that in abused women such strategies may actually be constructive. The use of active coping strategies such as confrontation may escalate abuse.

Few research studies have been designed to examine the construct of learned helplessness in abused women. No research to date has been found that includes measures of learned helplessness specifically in this population. Despite the lack of this kind of research a general acceptance of learned helplessness in battered women has occurred until fairly recently. Even Walker recently questioned the appropriateness of applying this construct to battered women (personal communication with Derwyn Whitbread, November 30, 1995). Critics of the learned helplessness theory posit that this construct relies too heavily on individual psychology rather than social forces to explain why women remain in abusive relationships (Flannery & Harvey, 1991). What appears to be learned helplessness behaviors may simply reflect the realities these women face as they attempt to leave their abuser (Carlisle-Frank, 1991; Jones, 1994; Okun, 1986; Pagelow, 1981; Strube & Barbour, 1983). Walker (1984) used the Levenson Locus of Control Scale (Levenson, 1973) to measure "internal", "powerful others" and "chance" control in abused women. She hypothesized that the abused women would score high on "powerful others" and "chance" dimensions. The women scored high on all three dimensions, however. Walker suggested that this reflects the women's belief that they had control over their lives and felt they would eventually be able to change the abuser's behavior. Walker calls this "learned hopefulness" not "helplessness".

Wauchope (1988) tested the learned helplessness theory by looking at the relationship between help-seeking behavior and the severity of violence. She found that as the severity of violence increased, women were more likely, rather than less likely to seek help. She interpreted this result as failing to support the learned helplessness theory. The research of Campbell (1989), Rodgers (1994), and Sullivan (1991) supports her findings.

Despite the controversy over the construct of learned helplessness, there is still much evidence pointing to learned helplessness as a factor contributing to battered women's behavior (Kuhl, 1985). It seems probable that an abused woman may experience learned helplessness in certain areas of her life. It would make sense that considering the abuse and the chaotic family life these women face, that generalized problem solving and coping would be impaired. Unfortunately, social factors may also mitigate against help seeking behaviors. Barriers to leaving the relationship might only serve to reinforce the women's perceived sense of learned helplessness. The controversy over learned helplessness is analogous to the "chicken and egg question". What came first; learned helplessness that interferes with help-seeking behaviors, or barriers such as lack of financial resources and effective legal responses, that contribute to learned helplessness?

Although no empirical studies have investigated the role of learned helplessness in help-seeking behaviors Walker (1989) stated that as the learned helplessness develops the woman believes that no matter what she does, she cannot stop the battering. She also fails to accept the assistance of those trying to help her because she believes such help will not be effective. Jacobson (1980) noted that the problems abused women face with an adversarial legal system all contribute to a sense of helplessness and powerlessness. He writes:

> In many cases leaving is not easy-they have few resources to change or leave the relationship. The lack of protection has repeatedly been identified as a central problem facing battered women. Many women described being afraid to seek help from the police or legal system because 'it wouldn't do any good'. (p. 7)

In 1987 Macleod also described the psychological effects that can occur when a woman seeks help. She noted that when a battered woman turns to others for help she often experiences a "secondary victimization". She wrote, "Women have been made to feel even more guilty or insane for seeking help for a 'non-problem' as defined by social workers, doctors, therapists, police, Rabbis, and even friends and family. Women are frequently left feeling dejected, rejected and without hope" (p. 31).

Jaffer *et al* (1992) noted that the battered woman is relatively powerless within the justice system. This system is complex and intimidating to almost everyone who doesn't work in it. It is especially intimidating to victims who are also having to deal with the trauma of abuse. Macleod and Picard (1989) in their study of battered women and the justice system, found that women who used the justice system spoke of the incredible strength of will it took to make the decision to phone the police or go to the courthouse.

A consequence of learned helplessness is that the abused woman is trapped in the relationship by psychological inertia. Once she finds the strength to leave the relationship, she is faced with inadequate financial support, limited social networks, fear, threats, and a justice system that may contribute to her feelings of powerlessness and helplessness. Whether or not we label this feeling of powerlessness "helplessness" or "learned helplessness", it is evident that the result is the same. "Learned helplessness" contributes to the woman remaining in a dangerous situation and is therefore an important construct to understand when examining abused women's coping responses to their experiences with the justice system.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was a diagnosis first applied to Vietnam veterans (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). This disorder received medical status in 1979 (American Psychiatric Association, 1980). It continues as a diagnosis in the current Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), (1994). The trauma associated with this disorder must be of a magnitude that it would be traumatic for almost anyone. The disorder is characterized by "(1) the re-experiencing of the trauma through dreams and waking thoughts, (2) persistent avoidance of reminders of the trauma and numbing of responsiveness to such reminders, and (3) persistent hyperarousal" (Kaplan, Saddock & Grebb, 1994, p. 606).

The diagnosis of PTSD has been applied to battered women. Barnett and LaViolette (1993) attempted to provide an analogy between PTSD in battered women and PTSD in war veterans. They used a quotation from Goodwin (1978, p. 8) and inserted parallel wording. They wrote:

> Due to circumstances of war [her married life], extended grieving was unproductive [and not allowed] and could become a liability [exacerbating his guilt, leading to increased anger]. Grief was handled as quickly as possible [to make way for the honeymoon stage]. Many soldiers [battered women] reported feeling numb. They felt depressed and unable to tell anyone. "How can I tell my wife [neighbor/friend/family member/pastor], she'll [he'll] never understand?"
>
> Essentially, Vietnam-style combat [home-style combat] held no final resolution of conflict for anyone. Regardless of how one might respond, the overall outcome seemed to be an endless production of casualties with no perceivable positive results. They found little support from their friends and neighbors back home, the people in whose name so many people were drafted into military service [a battering relationship]. They felt helpless. They returned to the United States trying to put some positive resolution to this episode in their lives, but the atmosphere at home was hopeless. They were still helpless. (p. 97)

The above analogy seems reasonable. A number of investigators have diagnosed PTSD in abused women. Kemp, Green, Hovanitz and Rawlings (1995) recruited a sample of 227 battered women. A comparison group of nonbattered women in conflictual relationships was also recruited for this study. To measure the extent of PTSD symptoms they used the Mississippi Scale for PTSD and the PTSD Self-Report Scale (Kemp, Rawlings & Green, 1991). Physical and verbal abuse was measured by the Conflict Tactics Scale, Form R (Straus, 1990). They also measured coping strategies using the Coping Strategies Inventory-Short Form (Tobin, Holroyd & Reynolds, 1984). They found that 81 percent of the subjects met the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis. Disengagement coping was the strongest predictor of current PTSD. This type of coping was evidenced in these women through wishful thinking, social withdrawal, problem-avoidance and self-criticism.

Other investigators and clinicians have also found that a large percentage of battered women meet the criteria for PTSD, although not to the same degree as the study above. Houskamp and Foy (1991) found that 45 percent of their sample met the criteria in the DSM-III-R for PTSD. They found that the extent and severity of exposure to violence was significantly correlated with the severity of PTSD symptomatology in battered women. A growing number of clinicians now suggest that PTSD may be the most accurate primary diagnosis for battered women (Browne, 1992; Davidson & Foa, 1991; Dutton, 1992; Herman, 1992; Koss & Harvey, 1991, Walker, 1991, 1992).

A central feature of PTSD is avoidance (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). In one study of PTSD and battered women the investigators found that hypersensitivity was the most common symptom manifested. Avoidance symptoms were the second most common symptoms manifested (Green, Lindy, Grace & Glese, 1989). This is consistent with results found by Kemp et al. (1995) as reported earlier. The use of avoidant strategies for coping may lead to an inability to problem solve. Barnett & LaViolette (1993) state that the "problem-solving deficits seem to be situation specific and an outcome of the cognitive distortions associated with PTSD" (p. 102).

No research has been found that documents the presence of and effect of PTSD behaviors in abused women when coping with the justice system. One might assume that the cognitive disturbances associated with the presence of PTSD would interfere with the woman's ability to cope with such an experience. These cognitive disturbances include a loss of memory, denial, minimization, repression of violent events, and avoidance (Hilton, 1993). In fact the Battered Woman Syndrome (Walker, 1989) has been developed as a subcategory of PTSD to help explain the seemingly passive, avoidant behaviors of battered women. This will be discussed next.

The Battered Woman Syndrome

Researchers and clinicians have attempted to explain why abused women stay in a relationship where they are severely abused. Together these explanations have loosely been referred to as the Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS) (Ewing, 1990; Schuller & Vidmar, 1992). Walker (1984) conceptualized it as a subcategory of PTSD and identified several key features. First, she posits that three phases occur in the battering relationship (1979). The "cycle of violence" contains the "tension building phase", the "acute battering phase", and the "honeymoon phase". In the tension building phase the abusive spouse engages in minor battering incidents and verbal abuse. Usually the woman rationalizes these incidents and placates her spouse in an attempt to prevent the abuse from escalating. This stage, however, is usually followed by the acute battering incident which is typically a "severe beating" (Walker, 1979). In phase three the batterer becomes remorseful, apologetic and loving. He assures her the battering will not be repeated. This cycle of violence, Walker notes is repeated continuously. With the completion of each cycle, the woman is encouraged that the batterer will change and she receives "positive reinforcement for remaining in the relationship" (Walker, 1979, p.70).

The second key feature of BWS according to Walker (1979) is that of "learned helplessness". Walker presumed that women who are repeatedly exposed to continued abuse over which they have no control and no apparent escape, respond with symptoms of learned helplessness. They become passive, lose their motivation to respond and operate from the belief that nothing they can do will alter their situation.

There is a lack of empirical literature examining the BWS. The research available is fraught with methodological limitations such as lack of control groups. Further, there is confusion over the definition of the BWS. Some authors define the BWS through the abusive acts committed against the woman (Campbell, 1990), whereas others, like Walker (1989) see it as a subcategory of PTSD.

One complex study designed to examine the presence of the BWS was conducted by Dutton and Painter (1993). They assessed 50 battered women and 25 verbally abused women at two points: just after leaving the relationship and six months later. The women completed a comprehensive test battery and were interviewed both times. They included in the test battery measures of the degree of physical violence, nonphysical aggression, intermittency of abuse, power, socially desirable responding, attachment, self-esteem and trauma symptoms. They arrived at a "composite score" from the various measures which they called the BWS. They concluded that this syndrome was largely accounted for by "dominance/isolation, intermittency of abuse, total physical abuse, emotional abuse and power shifts in the relationship" (p. 620). They stated, "hence a rather direct link is established between these factors and post-relationship distress assessed by a composite battered woman syndrome score" (p. 620). These variables predicted post-relationship distress correctly 91.3 percent of the time. They conclude by stating:

> In effect, the totality of symptom scores comprising the battered woman syndrome is affected by the severity of physical abuse, the intermittency of abuse-good treatment, dyadic power losses to the woman, and emotional abuse. It is suggested that each of these contributors be thoroughly assessed in court cases involving battered women. (p. 620)

Another study examined the concept of the BWS and the reliability of this construct as assessed by professionals working with battered women. Dodge and Greene (1991) constructed a questionnaire containing 18 items concerned with a battered woman's perceptions and beliefs. The questionnaire was sent to 72 identified researchers who had previously published in the area of abused women. Agreement was found to be 82 to 98 percent for the majority of the items. They concluded that considerable agreement, at least with respect to perceptions and beliefs of battered women exists in the relevant scientific community.

The BWS has been used in legal proceedings to expand the concept of self-defense for battered women (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). According to Barnett and LaViolette, "this defense holds that a battered woman is virtually held hostage in a violent household by a man who isolates and terrorizes her, convincing her that if she leaves he will track her down and kill her" (p. 108). DePaul (1992) described the BWS as "the situation of a long-time victim of physical, sexual and psychological abuse who losses self-confidence, feels trapped, and eventually strikes back, assaulting or killing the abuser" (p. 5). Expert witness testimony has been used in legal proceedings to explain the BWS to juries based on the assumption that the typical juror lacks the requisite knowledge to adequately evaluate the battered woman's situation (Schuller, 1992).

A number of studies have been designed to examine laypersons' beliefs about wife assault (Acker & Toch, 1985; Dodge & Greene, 1991; Ewing & Aubrey, 1987; Gentemann, 1984; Greene, Raitz & Linbald, 1989; Saunders, Lynch, Grayson & Linz, 1987). Some researchers have investigated the effect of the BWS on jurors (Fallingstad, et al., 1989; Schuller, 1992). Studies investigating beliefs held by the general public do indicate that their views of battered women are at variance with experts in the field. As a consequence juror's evaluations of the battered women's behavior is plagued by the question of why they did not leave to seek help (Schuller, 1992). They hold common misconceptions about battered women and the nature of the abusive relationship. Walker, Thyfault and Brown (1982) noted that the average layperson believes:

> that battered women are masochistic, that they stay with their mates because they like the beatings, that the violence fulfils a deep - seated need within each partner, or that they are free to leave such relationships if that is what they want. (p. 1)

The BWS is introduced to "provide the jurors with an alternative framework from which to interpret the woman's beliefs and action - a framework that renders her account of the events as reasonable, rather than aberrant" (Schuller, 1992, p. 599).

Although the use of the BWS has gained popularity is recent court trials of battered women, there is a lack of research on its impact or effects on jury decisions (Schuller & Vidmar, 1992; Schuller, 1992). Follingstad *et al* (1989) found that the presence of the BWS by expert testimony has no direct effect on verdicts. Methodological problems with this research limit the usefulness of this study, however. Schuller (1992) conducted two separate studies to examine the effect of the BWS on jurors. In one experiment subjects read about a homicide trail involving a battered woman who had murdered her husband. No expert testimony was provided to a control group. Another group received expert testimony presenting general research findings on the BWS. A third group received expert testimony with an opinion that the defendant fit the syndrome. They wrote, "the presence of the specific expert, compared to the control group, led to interpretations that were more consistent with the woman's account of what occurred. These interpretations, in turn, were related to more lenient verdicts" (p. 597). In the second experiment they investigated the effects of expert witness testimony of the BWS on small groups of deliberating jurors. They included a control situation. They found that both expert testimony, plus expert testimony with an opinion caused "moderate shifts in verdicts from murder to manslaughter" for both expert conditions (p. 597). The content of the deliberations indicated that the presence of the testimony led to more favorable interpretations of the woman's self-defense claim.

There are limitations with the argument that the BWS accounts for behaviors of battered women, including staying in the relationship. Some feminists have argued that it is a descriptive term and its focus on the incapacity and learned helplessness is not consistent with all battered women's actions (Crocker, 1985; Gillespie, 1989; Schneider, 1986). Browne (1987) felt that the word "syndrome" suggests a disorder or illness, which leads to labelling the woman's behavior as pathological. Most of the objections to the BWS come from the legal community. Morse (reported in Ewing, 1990) calls the BWS "enormously vague" and based upon "unacceptably soft science" (p. 590). The proposition that one can be psychologically destroyed has been widely accepted by experienced mental health professionals (Ewing, 1990). It is doubtful that the BWS can be put to an "empirically rigorous" test. The American Psychological Association has stated that "the battered woman syndrome diagnosis has a sound psychological basis" (quoted by Ewing, 1990, p. 579). They also wrote in 1994 that the BWS offers an explanation of the "psychological effects of cycles of violence and threat by an intimate partner and the relationship of those effects to her subsequent behaviors and perceptions" (Koss, *et al.*, 1994, p. 87).

While the BWS may be a useful psychological construct to describe the behaviors, perceptions and psychological effects of an abusive relationship on a battered woman, it may not provide the "best" explanation for a legal defense. The lack of empirical rigor limits the usefulness of this theory in legal doctrines. Nevertheless, the BWS has had significant impact on jurors, legal professionals and mental health professionals. It offers insight into the coping mechanisms of battered women.

Summary of Psychological Effects

Abused women in abusive relationships, or in the process of leaving appear to suffer major psychological effects (at least for six months after they have left their abuser). These women suffer from low self-esteem and depression, and may attempt suicide. Post-traumatic stress disorder may be a psychological manifestation of continued abuse in these women. Learned helplessness and acquiesence toward the abuser may result from the perception that the women have no alternatives; or from a lack of housing, resources, support and legal remedies. These psychological effects may eventually culminate in a cluster of symptoms and behaviors that constitute the BWS. At the core of this syndrome is fear and paralysis that helps to explain why the battered woman does not leave the abuser.

Unfortunately, statistics reveal that the "typical" battered woman does not call the police or seek legal help until she has been battered approximately 35 times (Jaffer, et al., 1992). The stress level for these women is already high. They then must face a legal system that has not been very effective (Alberta Law Reform Institute, 1995; Canadian Research Institute for Law & the Family, 1993; Jaffe, 1991; Jaffer et al., 1992; Macleod, 1989; Macleod & Picard, 1989, Marshall, et al., 1993). How do these women cope with this added stress? Little is known about their methods of coping because most of the research that is available has concentrated on identifying deficiencies in the justice system. Psychological effects have been mentioned to support the claims of an ineffective system. A review of identified deficiencies and difficulties in the justice system will now be presented.

Abused Women's Experiences With the Justice System

Significant changes in our understanding and response to wife assault have occurred in the past 20 years. In the late 1970's and early 1980's womens' groups pressured governments to stress the criminal nature of wife assault (Jaffer et al., 1992). Increased political and public attention resulted in many positive changes. Many professional disciplines became involved including social workers, psychologists and health care workers. Police also began to play a much more proactive role as well. In the early 1980's the federal Solicitor General wrote to all Chiefs of Police across Canada that family violence was a crime and where reasonable and probable grounds to lay a charge were evident, that police should do so (Macleod, 1994), In 1990, the Alberta Solicitor General sent a similar letter to all Chiefs of Police (Alberta Solicitor General, 1992-1993).

A number of other changes occurred in the past decade. Funding for shelters increased. Many services have developed protocols to deal more effectively with wife assault. Training for police is now provided to new recruits. Public education about family violence has become a priority for governments. Treatment programs for men who batter have increased in number. More recently evaluations of justice responses have occurred (Alberta Solicitor General, 1992-1993; Macleod, 1989; 1994). There are still problems with and gaps in services to abused women, however, especially with current justice system responses. What follows are reports and research about the effectiveness of justice system responses to wife assault.

Studies Investigating Justice Responses to Wife Assault

One of the earliest studies on wife assault was co-ordinated by Jacobson in 1982. Semistructured interviews were conducted with battered women, workers in the legal system, police, health care and social welfare professionals. This study is included to demonstrate that many of the problems the research team found in 1982 still exist today. The researchers in this study, noted that the women who sought police protection through the legal system found responses "wanting in terms of sympathy and follow-through" (p. 24). Many women reported that the police did not take them seriously and the actions taken by the police were ineffective. At times the abuser was not removed from the home and sometimes he was told to leave and not come back. Police inaction was also reported. When no physical proof of assault or when no restraining orders existed, the police said there was "nothing they could do to help" (p. 27).

Many of the battered women in this study had to lay the assault charge themselves. Currently, in all provinces in Canada, police are instructed to lay charges (personal communication, Detective Colin Milton, November, 1995). If insufficient grounds to do so exist and charges are not laid by the police, the woman still has the option of going to a Justice of the Peace and laying the charge. The results of the study by Jacobson (1982) indicate that this is not a simple process. The women were confused about where to lay charges. Should they do so in family or criminal court? The attitudes of the very people who were there to assist them to make informed decisions about court processes also presented a hurdle. The women reported they felt little sympathy from court officials. This made them feel guilty. Jacobson wrote, "attitudes of hostility and cynicism can directly contribute to a woman feeling defeated, and increase the possibility of her returning to a dangerous situation" (p. 28-29). The women reported that they frequently encountered officials (including police), who held the belief that if the women wanted to do something to stop the battering they could; therefore they must "like" the beatings. Even if charges were laid, the women would likely go back and therefore the process was a waste of time. It is true that many women do go back as noted by Rodgers

(1994) in the Violence Against Women Survey; however, it is not because they "like" the beatings or have control over the batterer's actions. The women responding to Jacobson's interviews noted that there are tremendous pressures on them to return. One of the most powerful of these are "the threats of killing and torturing the women, of hounding her for the rest of her life, of driving her insane, of kidnapping the children. The protection offered by the legal system is not as real as the threats from the husband" (p. 34).

This still occurs in today. In personal communication with a detective from the City of Edmonton Spousal Violence Follow-up Teams (Colin Milton, December, 1995) he reported that in a recent case the man was not prosecuted on assault charges because the woman did not show up in court. The detective speculated that he "had gotten to her" even though every effort was made to protect her. She knew he would not serve much time and would stalk her for the rest of her life.

Jacobson (1982) found that significant delays before court action is taken occurred during which time the woman lived in terror. Even restraining orders were found not to be effective in preventing harassment and threats. The length of time that it takes to go to court also dimished the impact of evidence. Ineffective restraining orders were also listed by these women. When the orders were broken, responses from police and justice officials were ineffective. Current research conducted by the Alberta Law Reform Institute (1995) cites ineffective restraining orders as a concern voiced by the women interviewed. Restraining orders were still noted to be "vague" and "penalties for breach of restraining orders were too light to be of any real deterrent" (p. 40).

Another issue noted in Jacobson's study (1982) was that of access to the children. "Husbands who have been found to be guilty of assault against their wives were nevertheless considered in many cases to be capable of being good parents" (p. 37). The women stated however, that the men often used the access as a way to continue the harassment and abuse. In 1995 the Alberta Law Reform Institute noted the respondents in their study reported "serious problems with inadequately worded access orders" (p. 31). The access orders still provided an opportunity for ongoing abuse. In 1995 the "courts were seen as reluctant to find that a history of abuse toward the wife was relevant to the issue of custody and access" (p. 32).

Jacobson (1982) summarized the respondents' concerns over justice system responses to wife assault. The women spoke of how frightening and stressful the legal process was for them. They felt helpless, exhausted and depressed after their experiences in court.

More recently, in 1989 Macleod prepared a document titled: Wife Battering and the Web of Hope: Progress, Dilemmas and Visions of Prevention. Discussion Paper. The paper is based on multiple interviews with professionals and agencies involved in wife assault across Canada. She reported that 70 to 80 percent of battered women would not seriously consider using the criminal justice system.

> Some women, who have had previous contact with the criminal justice system feel the control they experienced at the hands of the criminal justice system was worse then the control they experienced at the hands of their batterer. Others, who rely on their husband's incomes for their support, fear that their husbands will leave them, or that a prison sentence or fine will rob the entire family of a much-needed income. Still others want to keep their family together and fear that by calling in the police they will abandon all hopes of true reconciliation. (p. 5-6)

In 1989 Macleod and Picard also conducted a research project to investigate the problems abused women face in their attempts to use the justice system. They held discussion groups with "25 key informants within and outside the government" (p. 4). They also interviewed 55 people from the justice system and 40 women who had been battered and had contact with the justice system. Focus groups were also held with battered women and a "diverse mix of people from different sectors of the justice system" (p. 5). Once again, many of the concerns voiced in 1989 are still valid today. Macleod and Picard found that the women who were interviewed expressed their dissatisfaction with the justice system's response. They did not believe they could rely on the police for protection. They also stated they did not always want police involvement. They wanted police to validate their situation and talk the man into changing. When this did not occur, they were dissatisfied with the "system". When the women called the police for help, the police did not always take them seriously when threats of violence occurred in the absence of actual assaults. In 1995 the Alberta Law Reform Institute found that this still occurred in their study. Not all women reported negative experiences with the police; those who did voiced that the police did not seem to be aware of the risks they faced. They felt that they were viewed as "untrustworthy and hysterical" (p.38). Emotional abuse, threats and imminent danger were not recognized by police or courts. Finally, the women noted they felt they needed a restraining order to be taken seriously by police when threats occurred.

Macleod and Picard (1989) noted that the women needed information about the court process. They reported they felt attacked and unfairly treated in court. In 1995 the Alberta Law Reform Institute also found their respondents felt confused about the court process. They received little information about court proceedings. They said their lawyers (often from Legal Aid) and the prosecutors were rushed and had little time for their cases. Many women felt the "judicial attitudes toward battered women still reflected some stereotypes about women" (p. 36). They felt they needed to "present themselves as typical middle-class mothers in their dress and manner of speaking" to be seen as credible (p. 37).

Macleod and Picard (1989) found that the women they interviewed:

> spoke of the incredible strength of will it took to make the decision to phone the police or go to the courthouse in the first place. They wanted their strength to be recognized, applauded and reinforced, so that they would be empowered to make other difficult life decisions. (p. 28)

To be empowered, these women stated they needed access to counselling to help them grow beyond the fear, anger and denial. In this regard, McHardy (1992) wrote that "the integration of a panoply of legal services with counselling and shelter is a basic component of a full service, holistic approach to the needs of battered women. Counselling and legal activities tend to be mutually supportive" (p. 16). Boyd (1985) also noted that there is an intrinsic interrelationship between emotional support counselling and legal advocacy with battered women. Further, Boyd stated that most programs which focus on criminal prosecution alone, have failed. She noted that the follow-up study from the London Battered Woman's Advocacy Clinic revealed that legal concerns brought battered women to the clinic (48.9%). The majority of the women, however, stated that emotional support was their motivation for attending the clinic (52.6%). After attending the clinic only 26 percent found legal advocacy the most helpful services, while 70 percent cited emotional counselling as helping the most.

Jaffer *et al* (1992) formed a Task Force in British Columbia to examine overall community response to family violence, including that of the justice system. They noted that presenters to the Task Force emphasized that "the abused woman's experience of the justice system is still often one of revictimization" (p. 86). Submissions indicated that police, Crown Council and judges lack training to effectively deal with wife assault and still do not take it seriously. Many of the same problems, already listed in this literature review, were reported in the document developed by the Task Force. Inconsistent police response, a lack of information, rushed and busy lawyers and Crown counsel, ineffective protection orders (which take too long to receive), problems with breaches of protection orders, and a lack of consequences for these breaches were reported. They also found, (not mentioned in other studies), that some women are forced to use legal aid lawyers but might find no lawyer available in her community willing to take her case because legal aid tariffs are so low and the maximum allotment is usually not sufficient. The abusive man can usually afford to hire a lawyer while the battered woman needs to scramble. Custody and access created big problems for battered women. Mediation was also cited as a problem by presenters to the Task Force. Jaffer *et al* stated "in the space of an hour or two, a mediator, no matter how skilled, simply does not recognize the complex and intimate cues the abuser uses" (p. 94). They summarized "many battered women live in fear of the court process" (p. 96). Very few women feel that calling the police and going to court will stop the violence. They have little faith in this process.

Results from other studies designed to investigate abused women's experience with the justice system have indicated results similar to those already noted (Alberta Law Reform Institute, 1995; Bourg & Stock, 1994; Law Reform Commission of Nova Scotia, 1993; Macleod, 1994; Mahon, 1988; McQuaid, 1991). Additional concerns or issues with abused women from rural areas and from aboriginal communities can be found, although fewer studies specific to these populations exist.

McLaughlin and Church (1992) investigated the needs and concerns of rural women who were abused by their partners. Problems with the justice system formed a part of their report. The study was conducted in four counties in Ontario. Their sample was nonrandom. Sixty-one females filled out questionnaires and 22 were interviewed. Six focus groups were also held. Thirty-eight women had chosen not to contact police during their last abusive incident (67%). Of these, 21 percent did not want to call the police, 24 percent were afraid to call police and 18 percent could not get to a phone. Response time for these rural women when the police were called ranged from 15 minutes to in three cases, never arriving. When the police did attend, the partner was charged 18 percent of the time, but was not removed from the house. In 6 percent of the time he was charged and removed. In 6 percent of the time he was warned, in 6 percent of the time the women were told they could lay charges, and in 6 percent of the time, the women were told to leave the house themselves. Some women were asked if they wanted to go to a shelter, but only 24 percent were either taken to, or given information about a shelter. One woman was told to go to the hospital but was not taken. The response of the women to police intervention varied. Twenty-eight percent found that the police were "very helpful", 22 percent found them "helpful", 22 percent found them "somewhat helpful" and 28 percent found them "not helpful at all" (p. 25).

The focus groups held by McLaughlin and Church (1992) provided additional insights into rural women's experiences with spousal abuse and the justice system. Participants spoke of having no information and nowhere to turn for help. Isolation, transportation problems, and a lack of anonymity were given as reasons for not calling the police. They, like other women, noted the police did not take them seriously. They were treated as though they were "out of control" and made to feel like they were creating the problems. The women spoke of incidents that "demonstrate that some police officers still do not view woman abuse as a crime, or are reluctant to deal with it" (p. 25).

Frank (1993) summarized presentations made to the Task Force on Family Violence and to the Royal Commission on Health Care and Costs that described aboriginal women's experience with wife assault. She wrote, "family violence is an undisputed reality in First Nations communities" (p. 2). Among aboriginal women one study cited by Frank noted that one out of every three aboriginal women is abused by her partner. Contributing factors include alcohol and substance abuse, economic problems and intergenerational transfer of abuse. Low self-esteem, loss of traditional values and other personal and environmental stressors also contribute to spousal abuse in these communities.

Frank (1993) noted that aboriginal people face many gaps and obstacles in the various social systems and programs offered around family violence. She noted that physical isolation and the need to leave the reserve and travel a long way is a specific barrier to these women receiving adequate help. Other issues include racism, fear of losing one's children, fear of being revictimized by the services, fear of not being understood, lack of resources, lack of cultural services to meet their needs, lack of follow-up and support, fragmentation of services, and ineffective (top-down, authoritative) communication from service providers.

Aboriginal women face many problems when attempting to free themselves from abusive relationships. Many do not even consider using the justice system because they do not feel it would help them. They may cope by leaving their communities to go to other settlements or urban centers where they face unemployment, issues of inadequate housing, education and support services, and racism (personal communication, Sue Languedoc, Aboriginal Consulting Services Association, February, 1996). The Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in Manitoba was quoted by Frank (1993) who wrote:

> aboriginal women and their children suffer tremendously as victims in contemporary society. They are victims of racism, of sexism and of unconscionable levels of domestic violence. The justice system has done little to protect them from any of these assaults. (p. 15).

Summary

Abused women suffer from serious psychological effects while in the abusive relationship. Studies point out that low self-esteem, depression, hopelessness, helplessness, acquiescence toward the abuser, hypervigilance and anxiety, dissociation and anger are a few of the psychological results of living in an abusive relationship. Some writers have termed the culmination of these effects the battered woman syndrome (BWS). It is unclear what this term encompasses as there is little research about this syndrome and some disagreement in both the professional and legal communities about symptomatology. It seems reasonable that part of this syndrome includes PTSD and learned helplessness. It is also clear from the research that abused women face many obstacles as they try to free themselves from the abuse. The justice system represents only one of these obstacles; however, it is a significant obstacle. Faced with obstacles and in a state of "psychological inertia" (Walker, 1989), these women may chose ineffective and sometimes dangerous alternatives. Suicidal threats and attempts are not infrequent (Walker, 1979, 1989) and even murder is not rare. The women may resort to either. They women may also end up seriously hurt or even murdered by their abuser. This again, is not rare (Wilson & Daly, 1994).

It is important for those involved in counselling and supporting abused women to understand not only the psychological effects that directly result from the abuse, but also those that result when the women face obstacles as they try to free themselves. One of these is the justice system. Many of the studies reviewed indicate that our current judicial system is not effective. It is also confusing. Abused women must face an ineffective and confusing system when they are perhaps most vulnerable psychologically. Little is known about how they perceive this or how they cope. Boyd (1985) wrote that abused women must be given information and emotional support throughout the legal process. This will enable them to take more responsibility in their roles as chief witnesses; they may be able to utilize the justice system in a more productive manner. Without adequate emotional support, Boyd noted that the hurdles abused women face with the justice system may seem insurmountable the women may see returning to their partner as their only alternative.

Criticisms of Current Literature

Many studies on assaulted women have relied on samples drawn from police records, court records and shelters. Several researchers have acknowledged that these samples are underrepresentative (Health & Welfare Canada, 1989; Macleod, 1987). The research on the experience abused women face with the justice system has relied on even more limited samples. The sample sizes in these studies have generally been small. In many of the studies, abused women are not even represented or ignored. Information has been gathered from justice officials, professionals, academics and government officials. Data gathered in studies which included abused women has generally been extracted through semistructured interviews where the questions have been predetermined by the researchers. Few researchers have acknowledged their assumptions and biases. Furthermore, in some studies the interviews have been conducted by legal professionals or by persons viewed as "outsiders" by abused women. Some women have informed this writer that they have not been totally open with such persons for fear they "would not understand, care or listen" or that they "would exploit" them (personal communication with abused women, 1995-1996).

Concept mapping is a method that may be used to overcome some of the shortcomings of research into abused women's experiences with the justice system and how they cope with these experiences. It is a method that utilizes a "bottom-up" process to generate statements by participants about the phenomena of interest. It encourages participants to be involved in an equal relationship with the researcher. Concept mapping can be used to overcome participants' concerns about feeling exploited. By actively participating in the generation of statements a feeling of ownership of the data is created. Concept mapping incorporates qualitative statements into multivariate techniques appropriate for clustering the data into thematic categories. It is an appropriate technique for clustering coping and experiences abused women have with the justice system. It is a useful form of analysis when the goal of the research is exploration and when little is known about the data (Borgen & Barnett, 1987). It is also a technique that helps reduce potential bias and subjectivity that may be present when qualitative data is analyzed for themes. A search of the literature on abused women's experiences with the justice system failed to identify any studies done with abused women using concept mapping.

Once identified through written responses, interviews and focus groups, the experiences abused women have with the justice system, and their coping abilities can be analyzed using concept mapping to discover themes. An understanding of what types of experiences abused women have with the justice system will be beneficial to those counselling and supporting these women. An understanding of how they coped with these experiences can also facilitate treatment techniques. Finally, an increased understanding of the issues and experiences may be of interest to officials in the judicial system. For example, knowledge of police practices may be of interest to administrators of police services.

Conclusions

In summary, it appears that there is a need to investigate abused women's experiences (and how they cope) with the justice system from a user group, bottom-up perspective. No studies have been found that have specifically focused on a sample of abused women to examine their experiences with the justice system and how they cope with these experiences. Further, no studies have been found that have utilized concept mapping to examine the themes such experiences might create. The following is an overview of concept mapping methodology.

Concept Mapping

Concept mapping has several distinct advantages. Linton (1989) suggests that concept mapping invites many and diverse voices to be heard. The participants "name" their own reality in their own words. It is nonjudgemental; all contributions are accepted and have equal power. Power is balanced between participants and researcher. There is a minimum of intrusion of the researcher's opinion. It does not eliminate any of the ideas; they all appear on the map. This is one of the distinct advantages over factor analysis which seeks to find commonalities while eliminating data. Concept mapping presents all of the ideas and demonstrates the relationship ideas have to each other. The holistic view provided through concept mapping reveals simultaneously each entity in relation to all others, as well as the total concept. It emphasizes connections rather than "significant" differences. It actively involves the participants in the knowledge-creation process. This is particularly important with abused women. Many women in the crisis/support group relate that they are tired of being "studied" and exploited. The process of concept-mapping enables a "bottom-up" process that creates a feeling of ownership of the product of the participants thereby increasing the chances of valid results. Finally, the resultant map is easily understood and does not exclude people from understanding its results if they do not understand statistics.

Concept mapping, although not yet widely utilized, has been demonstrated to be useful in a number of studies. Chorney (1994) summarizes how concept mapping is useful for describing experiences of people, investigating people's beliefs, and exploring perceptions of groups of people. Wiener, Wiley, Huelsman & Hilgemann (1994) demonstrates how effective concept mapping was when combined with qualitative interviews to evaluate a crisis service in Madison County. Linton (1989) utilizes concept mapping to develop a framework for understanding the concept of feminism. Valentine (1989) conceptualizes "caring" through the use of the concept mapping process with nurses. Daughtry & Kunkel (1993) used concept mapping to describe the experience of depression in college students. They noted that previous depression-related research emphasizing conceptual measurement issues resulted in a lack of understanding of the experience of depression. Finally, Trochim (1989b) lists twenty projects which utilize concept mapping to illustrate a wide variety of subject areas for the application of the concept mapping process.

For the purpose of this study concept mapping was chosen for the following reasons:

1. Concept mapping will allow abused women themselves to describe their experiences with the justice system and will allow them to influence the systematic conceptualization of their experiences.

2. Concept mapping will allow for the development of and sorting of up to 98 statements for each question and then the systematic identification of concepts of dimensions related to their experience.

3. Concept mapping results will be utilized to provide the background information for developing a Likert-type survey (questionnaire) for wider dissemination to abused women.

4. Concept mapping is not an intrusive research technique. Participants develop and influence the concepts; therefore feelings of exploitation or of "being studied" by outsiders should be decreased. Ownership of the results should increase and therefore validity of the results should increase.

Background to Concept Mapping.

Trochim (1989a) introduced a methodology termed concept mapping. It is an approach that is particularly "appropriate for applications in which researchers are seeking to clarify the domain, constituent elements, and underlying structure of a phenomenon as experienced within the population of interest" (Daughtry & Kunkel, 1993, p.317). Concept mapping does not rely on conceptually or diagnostically based *"a priori"* formulations. Through the use of this methodology, researchers first directly seek participants' perspectives on the ways in which they experience the phenomenon of interest through a probe, usually an open-ended question. This question is designed to focus on eliciting participants' perspectives, while remaining ambiguous enough not to unduly influence their response.

The process for concept mapping involves six steps through which a map is developed that presents themes. This methodology is a statistical technique that allows data to be represented in a pictorial format and provides a "bridge" between qualitative and quantitative analysis. Daughtry & Kunkel (1993) note that concept mapping "combines phenomenological and quantitative research strategies and actively involves research participants in item generation and data gathering" (p. 317.)

The first step in concept mapping is the generation of statements by participants.

Participants generate statements guided by a specific prompt that limits the types of responses that are acceptable (Trochim, Cook & Setze, 1994). Any number of statements can be collected. Trochim (1989a) recommends that usually up to 98 statements can be collected. These are printed on cards and duplicated for the second step, the structuring stage. In this step the statements are sorted into meaningful piles that make sense to each participant. No restrictions are placed on the participants' sorting strategies other than they not place each item card alone in a pile or place all cards in one pile. According to Rosenberg & Kim (1975) this method has the advantage of;

> making it unnecessary for either the respondents of the investigator to specify any of the psychological dimensions or attributes that can provide a basis for judgements of similarity. The identification of underlying dimensions or attributes can take place from the structures obtained by scaling and clustering, leaving the respondent's judgements uncontaminated by an investigator's preconceptions. (p.490)

Once this step is completed a microcomputer software program called the Concept System (Trochim, 1993) is used to enter and analyze the sorted data. The algorithm for the nonmetric multidimensional scaling is contained in the program to produce a pictorial representation of the sorted data, which is called a concept map.

Multidimensional scaling from the program produces a point map and cluster analysis produces a cluster map (Trochim, 1989a). In a point map, each statement is represented as a point and distances between each point represent how "closely" or how often these statements were grouped together by the people sorting the statements into piles. Using cluster analytic techniques the individual statements are then grouped into clusters which presumably reflect similar concepts. Usually cluster solutions between 3 to 20 clusters are developed (Trochim, 1989a). Through a trial and error approach, the analyst aims for groupings that make sense of the statements in the conceptualization. These maps can be shown to participants who name each cluster in a manner analogous to naming factors in factor analysis. The final cluster map constitutes the conceptual framework and the basic result of the concept mapping process. The map is the product of the participants, expressed in their language.

Multidimensional Scaling

Multidimensional scaling (MDS) is used to develop the point maps of items in concept mapping (Trochim, 1989a). It does not categorize the data into groups and therefore must be used in combination with cluster analysis (Trochim, 1989a). Two-dimensional nonmetric MDS is carried out on the sort data by the Concept System. Each statement is located as a separate point on a map. In concept mapping, the analyst typically selects a two-dimensional solution whereby the Concept System places a set of points into a bivariate distribution which is suitable for plotting an X-Y graph (Trochim, 1989a). The point map which is created represents the set of statements that were based on a similarity matrix that results from the sorting task. Statements that are closer to each other are more likely to have been sorted together more frequently, and therefore be related to the same concept.

Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis assigns the total variance of a variable to one underlying source and is therefore used in concept mapping to categorize data (Borgen & Weiss, 1971). In the Concept System, cluster analysis yields discrete sets of variables which are related. The technique used in the Concept System is called hierarchical cluster analysis (Trochim, 1989a). This technique is applied to the X-Y MDS coordinate values for each point and groups individual statements from the point maps into clusters of statements which share similar concepts. Any number of clusters are possible using this analysis; hierarchical cluster analysis procedures give as many cluster solutions as there are statements. The task of the analyst is to describe how many clusters the statements should be grouped into for the final solution. This is done by developing clusters and examining which statements are grouped together at each step to decide whether the groupings make sanse.

Summary of Concept Mapping Statistical Analysis.

After the generation of statements and structuring of statements through the sorting process, the results are combined. First, the results for each person are put into a square table or binary symmetric matrix. Then the individual sort matrices are added together to form a combined similarity matrix. This final matrix provides information about how participants grouped the statements.

MDS techniques are then applied to the final matrix using a two-dimensional solution. A point-map results where each statement is located as a separate point on the map; statements closer to each other were typically sorted together more frequently. These points are subjected to hierarchical cluster analysis and a cluster map is produced. Finally, each of the statements contained in the clusters are used to name or describe the cluster.

Reliability and Validity of Concept Mapping.

Trochim (1989b) notes that to date there have been no major attempts to investigate the reliability and validity of concept mapping. Since 1989 no articles were found that were designed specifically to investigate reliability or validity of concept mapping. There has been some discussion about these two issues, however. Reliability, Trochim (1989b) states refers to the degree in which a map is "repeatable". Validity refers to the degree in which a map accurately represents reality.

Trochim (1989b) notes that reliability can be affected in several steps of the concept mapping process. Specifically, reliability could be affected during the brainstorming (or statement development step), during the sorting and rating of the data, during cluster labelling and finally in the end product, the map that is produced. Reliability could be assessed by having different groups develop maps, perhaps by using random assignment, or by having the same group develop a map a second time (a type of test-retest reliability). Each of these methods, however, pose methodological difficulties. For instance, how would one assess the degree of similarity between the maps developed? Trochim (1989b) writes, "While no direct evidence is available on reliability, we can get a rough indication by visually examining maps from similar populations on similar topics" (p.107). Daughtry and Kunkel (1993) note that in multidimensional scaling a "stress value" is computed. This is one measure of the stability of the MDS solution. It is a value that ranges from zero (perfectly stable) to one (perfectly unstable). The stress value provides some evidence about the reliability of the data.

Validity of concept mapping can be examined in several ways. One method would be to compare concept maps with comparable information from other sources. For example, one might compare statements with transcripts from interviews (Trochim, 1989b). Weiner et al (1994) combined concept mapping with qualitative interviews to assess whether or not a Crisis Service in Madison County was meeting the needs of clients. They found that the quantitative method of Concept Mapping added strength to the study because it helped the researchers develop a list of needs that was diverse and complete. They concluded that the combination of the two methods increased confidence in the results. The fact that the themes emerging from the interview data were similar to the goals and dimensions that came out of the concept mapping process increased the researcher's confidence in the validity of their results.

Another method to assess validity of results is to have participants validate the maps themselves much as a qualitative interviewer would have participants validate interview transcripts. Finally, validity can be examined by looking at whether or not concept maps confirm theoretically expected differences. In the present study the women who were involved in the statement generation and the sorting of statements could be asked to validate the concept maps that result. The concept maps will also be compared to data from other studies about abused women's experience with the justice system.

Application to Current Research

As identified in the literature review, most of the research that has been done about abused women's experiences with the justice system have originated with the purpose of identifying deficiencies in the system from a top-down perspective. Structured and semi-structured interviews have been employed. The psychological effects of this experience, including coping, have been mentioned to back claims of an ineffective system. Some studies have not even included abused women in the sample of persons interviewed. Studies that have included abused women have typically utilized small samples. The data collected through interviews has been analyzed qualitatively. Major themes have been extracted from the data. Few studies present possible biases during data collection or data analysis. Audit trails are almost nonexistent in these studies. It appears that no studies have been conducted using the concept mapping methodology to examine abused women's experiences with the justice system or how they cope with these experiences. Once these are identified, the prevalence could be determined in a sample of abused women across Alberta. The purpose of this research was to attempt to answer three questions: (1) What types of experiences or issues do abused women have with the justice system (the justice system as defined from their perspective)?, (2) How did they cope with their experiences with the justice system?, (3) What is the prevalence of the issues and coping methods in a larger sample of abused women in the province?

Chapter 3: METHOD

Introduction

A review of the literature related to abused women's experiences with the justice system and coping with these experiences reveals a need to examine the experiences from their perspective. This would compliment previous literature that has focused primarily on the deficiencies of the justice system when dealing with battered women from the perspective of professionals involved with the justice system. The concept mapping method utilized in the present study represents an approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Concept mapping is a "structured conceptualization" (Trochim, 1989a, p.1) which consists of three main components. The first component involves the generation of ideas or statements about a specific research question by a group of participants. The second component involves having these participants sort the statements into piles to determine the interrelationships between the statements. Multivariate statistical techniques are applied to this information to determine underlying categories. The third component involves developing a picture or a map that depicts the themes generated from the multivariate statistics.

Phase I: Concept Mapping

Generation of Statements

To address the research questions of what types of experiences or issues abused women have with the justice system and how they cope with these experiences, abused women were asked to respond to the following: "Please describe an issue or experience you have had with the justice system or officials (police, lawyers, judges, social workers, or anyone else involved with the justice system) that had to do with family violence". "How did you cope with your experience with the justice system?". The responses were collected in three ways. First, some were asked to provide responses in writing (see

Appendix B). Second, some were asked to respond during interviews. Third, some gave their collective responses in a focus group. The responses of each woman were written during the interviews and the focus groups. The following is a detailed description of these processes.

Participants.

Participants for the concept mapping were sought from a variety of settings. These settings included a rural support group for abused women, two urban support groups for abused women, and Changing Together, A Centre for Immigrant Women. Participants ranged in age from their early twenties to late sixties. All but two women had left their abuser. One woman had never left her husband and one woman's abusive partner moved back in with her after release from incarceration. All women were solicited on a volunteer basis to participate in the interviews, the focus group, or provide written responses to the questions. Most, but not all the volunteers had children. Some participants were currently involved with the justice system; some had previous involvement. Participants from varied ethnic backgrounds (including Caucasion, French, Chinese, East Indian, and Native) were solicited to ensure a broad sample.

Participants completed a consent form (see Appendix B) either verbally or in writing. This consent form indicated the purpose of the research, that participation was voluntary and that they could discontinue participation at any time. Participants were also assured that their answers would be kept completely confidential and anonymous. Finally, participants were informed that the results of the study would be shared with them and they could chose to become involved in Phase II of the study (the survey). If, for any reason the participants found by answering the questions that they needed, and were not already involved in counselling, appropriate referrals would occur. One woman was referred to a crisis/support group and provided with information about this group. Ethical approval from the Department of Educational Psychology Research and Ethics Committee was obtained.

Written Responses.

Initial plans for the concept mapping were to collect the majority of the responses using a written format. To this end numerous typed sheets with the two items of inquiry and instructions for completing them were provided to women in the support groups. Despite frequent discussion about these responses at weekly meetings, very few written responses were returned. A total of five written responses were returned out of approximately 100 given out. Many of the women told this writer that they had great difficulty writing about their experiences for various reasons. The greatest difficulty they said was summarizing and condensing their experiences into one or two sentences. Many of those approached for written responses stated it would be easier to talk about their experiences then to write about them and many agreed to be interviewed.

Interviews.

A total of 18 women were interviewed to collect responses to the two items of inquiry either in person or on the phone. Permission to interview each woman was requested. Each woman was asked if she preferred to be interviewed in person or on the phone and interviews were set at her convenience. Two interviews were conducted at Changing Together, A Centre for Immigrant Women. These interviews were arranged by the social worker at the centre. Interviews ranged in time from ten minutes to two hours. Most interviews were conducted in one hour. Prior to each interview the participants were informed of the purpose of the study. The consent form was read to them and they were given the opportunity to consent to the interview either verbally or in writing. They were then informed again that they could chose not to answer any of the questions. None of the women chose this option. They were also informed notes would be taken.

The interviews were semistructured. Participants were asked to describe any experiences or issues they had with the justice system. They were told their experience could include anyone who was involved in this experience. After they had responded to the first question they were asked how they coped with these experiences. Participants were free to respond and illustrate concepts. Morse and Field (1995) note that semistructured interviews are useful "when the researcher knows most of the questions to ask but cannot predict the answers" (p. 94). A semistructured questionnaire, short questions that serve as prompts and a conversational tone during the interview are appropriate for exploring such experiences. Open-ended questions and general prompts were utilized to encourage participants to elaborate on responses.

Interviews were concluded when the participants responded to both items of inquiry and no new topics or themes were presented. Each participant was then asked, "Is there anything else that you can tell me to help me understand your experience with the justice system?". Some participants used this opportunity to present other issues or to tell this writer of changes she would like to see in the justice system's respones to abused women. Information gathered from the interviews was documented as each woman talked. Permission to do so was obtained from each woman. They were told that no identifying information was recorded. Validation and paraphrasing was used during interviews to ensure accurate responses were recorded. Following each interview transcripts were read and re-read. Individual issues or experiences with the justice system and items that illustrated how they coped with these experiences were extracted and transferred to a master list. Once the issue or experiences and the method of coping were added to the master list the women were contacted again to validate the item. They were asked if the item reflected what they had told this writer during the interview and if not, they were given the opportunity to correct each item extracted from their interview. They were informed that the item would appear on the survey as it had been validated. Many participants indicated they appreciated the opportunity to validate their response.

Focus Groups.

This writer attended a support group in rural Alberta three times. The first two times were to develop a sense of trust with participants and to hold a focus group. The third was to follow-up and obtain permission to interview women who were not present at the focus group. McDonald (1993) notes that focus groups are a very convenient way to gather information. Basch (1987) wrote, "the focus group interview is a qualitative research technique used to obtain data about feelings and opinions of small groups of participants about a given problem, experience, service or other phenomenon" (p.414). Participants at the focus group were informed about the purpose of the study. They were told that they could chose not to participate, and that responses would be written but kept confidential and anonymous. They were also informed that the results would be shared with them. A total of six abused women were present. The facilitator of the group was also present. This group meets weekly for crisis issues and provides support for the abused women. The initial focus of the group was on personal needs of group members. The latter part of the group was devoted to this research. The two information queries were presented to the group members and each member was encouraged to answer in a nonthreatening, supportive climate. No member was dominant. All of the women present had the opportunity to share their issues or experiences.

This writer then attended the group for a third time because participants in the group did not all attend weekly. The writer wanted to ensure the issues or experiences of rural women with the justice system were adequately represented. Women who had not been present at the previous group were approached and permission was received to interview them. Interviews were conducted as previously described. Following the focus group meeting, individual items were extracted from the transcripts and added to the master list. Validation of separate responses with each woman from the focus group was not possible. The responses added to the master list were validated with one group member who was present during the focus group to ensure accuracy of each item.

Summary of Generation of Statements

Responses to the two items of inquiry asking abused women to describe their issues or experiences with the justice system and how they coped with these experiences were collected through written responses, interviews and a focus group. Individual issues and methods of coping were extracted and then added to a master list. These items were validated with participants to ensure that they were accurate and captured the essence of the women's experience as expressed in their words. Redundant responses were only listed once. A total of 105 issues or experiences were collected regarding women's experience with the justice system and a total of 63 different ways of coping were collected. These were reviewed for redundancy and reduced to 98 and 59 individual items respectively. These are reported In Appendix A.

Data collection for Phase I was considered complete at this stage. After about the fifteenth interview issues or experiences, and methods of coping started to become redundant. Once 105 issues or experiences were collected they needed to be reduced to 98 to be analyzed by the concept system (Trochim, 1993).

Structuring of the Statements

Following the identification of the issues/experiences and methods of coping, the statements were sorted by women who attend the urban support group for battered women and some group members from the rural support group to determine if each individual response could be placed into distinct categories that would help give meaning to them. A detailed outline of the sorting procedure used to develop the themes contained in the concept map is provided in this section.

Sample.

Twenty sorts were given to women who attend the urban and rural support groups. The women were approached in each of these groups and asked if they would participate in the process to help develop themes from the individual statements. Each of the individual items were typed onto separate pieces of paper. A complete set of 98 issues or experiences and 59 methods of coping were given to each sorter along with a set of instructions to sort the statements into groups which contain common themes (see Appendix C). The women were asked to volunteer for this task and were told they could discontinue participation at any time. They were told to make as many groups as they wished and that statements could be kept separate if they felt they did not fit into any group. In addition, they were instructed not to put all 98 issues or experiences into one pile, or all 59 coping statements into one pile. The sorters were asked to place their sorts into envelopes and write on the outside of each envelope what they believed the themes to be. Sorters remained anonymous; no names or identifying data were requested.

Of the twenty sorts distributed, 16 were returned. One sort, however was sorted by a group of eight to ten women during two sessions and was therefore not included for analysis. This sort is in Appendix E. One other sort was not included in the analysis as the sorter had placed more than one third of the responses in one pile for each of the sets of responses. Trochim (1994) notes that "excluding lumpers from the analysis may make the result more interpretable" (p. 771).

Data Analysis.

Individual matrices or the binary symmetric similarity matrices were computed for the sorted items. Then the individual sort matrices were combined into a group similarity matrix using the concept system (Trochim, 1993). The data from the group similarity matrix was analyzed using a nonmetric multidimensional scaling (MDS) procedure with a two-dimensional solution. Two-dimensional solutions are easier to work with when an MDS configuration is required as the basis on which to display clustering results (Kruskel & Wish, 1978).

This analysis created a point map representing an X-Y coordinate for each statement. The configuration was based on the criterion that statements sorted together most often are located closer in two-dimensional space, whereas those sorted together less frequently are place further apart (Trochim, 1989a). This statistical method has successfully represented the relationships among variables by spatial representation of proximities, especially when the underlying relations are not well developed or are unknown (Kruskal & Wish, 1978).

A final stress value was computed for the two-dimensional solution of the MDS analysis. The stress value is a numerical index of the stability of the MDS solutions and ranges from zero (perfectly stable) to one (perfectly unstable) (Daughtry & Kunkel, 1993). This value indicates the degree of departure of the observed or calculated similarity from the true or judged similarity among items taken two at a time.

In the next stage of analysis, Ward's hierarchical cluster analysis was used to define the conceptual domains (Trochim, 1989a). The data obtained from the MDS configuration was utilized to obtain groups of items sorted into internally consistent clusters. The resultant cluster solution was partitioned into a number of clusters and superimposed on the MDS point map. No simple mathematical criterion exists to facilitate the selection of the final number of clusters (Trochim, 1989a). Trochim recommends examination of cluster solutions ranging from about 3 to 20 clusters. Each possible cluster solution is examined with the goal being to maintain the integrity of the MDS results through the absence of overlapping clusters, while maintaining meaningful relationships. This resulted in acceptance of cluster solutions that preserved the most detail and yielded interpretable clusters of experiences or issues and coping responses (Trochim, Cook, & Seltz, 1994).

Finally, the MDS configurations of the 98 and 59 points representing experiences or issues and coping responses were graphed in two dimensions. These "point maps" illustrated the location of all the statements, with statements closer to each other expected to be more similar in meaning. "Cluster maps" were also created. These displayed the 98 and 59 points enclosed by boundaries to form clusters. In Chapter Four, the results obtained from the concept mapping phase of this study will be presented.

Once the clusters were identified and the cluster maps developed, the clusters were named by the women involved in sorting the statements. The individual sorts and the themes identified by the sorters were reviewed by this author. Names chosen by the sorters were taken back to them and the final names for the clusters were agreed upon by the women.

Phase II: The Prevalence Study

To what extent do other abused women face the same issues or experiences and how do they cope was the next research question? To answer this question the issues or experiences and coping methods identified in Phase I of this study were included in a survey and sent to a wide sample of abused women across Alberta. The next section presents a detailed description of the survey, and the procedure followed to collect the prevalence data.

Subjects

Various agencies and organizations that work with abused women in Alberta were approached to disseminate the survey through their centres. No abused women were contacted by phone or mail as such action may have placed them in danger if they were living with their abusive partner. For safety reasons and to attain a large sample the survey was distributed through persons working in agencies and organizations. The surveys were then returned to the agency or organization who in turn, returned the surveys to this writer. The agencies and organizations to which the surveys were sent included 27 shelters in Alberta through the Director of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters, and to a shelter in Morley, Alberta not currently under this umbrella organization. The Y.W.C.A. programs that counsel/support abused women both in Calgary and Edmonton agreed to disseminate the surveys to women who attend their programs. The Directors of the City of Edmonton, Community and Family Services all agreed to distribute the surveys to women who receive counselling/support for abuse or who attend groups for abused women run through these centers. The Social Worker from the Hobemma Tribal Council agreed to distribute the survey to abused women in her area. A rural support group agreed to distribute the survey to abused women who attended and finally, The Aboriginal Consulting Services in Edmonton agreed to distribute the survey to their clientelle. A total of 347 surveys were sent out, 27 of which the Director of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters sent to shelters with instructions to photocopy as many as needed.

Initially, only 32 completed surveys were collected approximately one month after dissemination. All agencies that the surveys were sent to were contacted by telephone and inquiries were made about the status of the suveys. Some of the persons who had agreed to disseminate the surveys stated they had received some back; some stated they had not yet given them out. They were told that this author would contact them again in a few weeks. Two of the persons who had agreed to disseminate the surveys did not return any phone calls or messages left to inform this author of the status of the surveys. After approximately six weeks 48 surveys had been returned. Another phone call to agencies resulted in an extra eight surveys being returned for a total of 55 completed surveys. One survey was returned half completed and was not included in the prevalence study. Many of the surveys collected were from the support groups in north Edmonton and the rural support group that this author had attended personally to discuss the study. The return rate of these surveys was approximately 80 percent. From other agencies, with which this writer had no personal involvement, the return rate was much lower at about ten to fifteen percent. A total of 55 surveys returned gave a return rate of twenty percent.

Of the returned surveys 32 women were from the Edmonton area, 9 were from Fort Saskatchewan, 2 from Red Deer, 1 from Olds, 1 from Grande Prairie, 1 from Peace River, 1 from Douglasville, Georgia, 2 from Morley, 2 from Sherwood Park and 4 were from Calgary. The age of respondants ranged from 22 to 57 years old, with the mean age being 36.35 years. Five women indicated they were currently with their partner, the remainder were separated or divorced. The mean length of the relationship was 8.56 years with a range of 1 to 28 years. Those who were separated were separated for 1 week to 12 years with a mean of 2.35 years. Most women had children. The mean number of children was 2 but the number of children ranged from 0 to 5. One woman indicated she was pregnant. The types of violence these women experienced included insults/swearing (n=51), emotional abuse (n=53), threats (n=46) and physical violence (n=46). One woman wrote she was also being threatened by her 17 year old son and had experienced physical violence by her husband and her 18 year old son.

Measures.

The survey that was developed contained a letter of introduction, a part to collect demographic information and the individual items collected in Phase I of this study exactly as they were validated in the concept mapping phase (see Appendix D).

Letter of Introduction: This section consisted of a letter of introduction about the purpose of the survey, how the items on the survey were developed and how the results would be used. In this letter participants were assured their answers would be kept confidential and anonymous and that participation was completely voluntary. Instructions for completing used. In this letter participants were assured their answers would be kept confidential and anonymous and that participation was completely voluntary. Instructions for completing the survey were provided.

Demographic Information: This section consisted of demographic questions (eg: area of residence, age relationship status, number of children and ethnic origin). Information about the degree and nature of violence in the relationship was also requested. The women were asked to check what type of violence occurred and to please describe it.

Survey Items: This section of the survey consisted of the 98 issues or experiences and the 59 methods of coping derived from the interviews, written responses and focus groups. The statements in the survey were written exactly as they were validated with each respondant in Phase I (the concept mapping phase) to eliminate any bias. The survey was pretested by women who attended the urban support group. They provided feedback about the scale. A five-point scale was not considered appropriate because "not applicable" and "strongly disagree" would provide the same information for many items. A four-point Likert-type scale was chosen. Respondents were asked to rate each item as to the degree they believed the item related to their own experiences on a four-point Likert-type scale from "doesn't apply to me at all" to "applies to me extremely well".

Data Analysis

Basic descriptive statistics were calculated for the responses to the surveys. Means and standard deviations for the responses that were indicated as applicable by respondants were calculated for each item. These means were calculated using "1" for applies a little to my situation, "2" for applies quite a bit and "3" for applies extremely well to my situation. Percentages of responses that were rated as applicable to respondents situations were calculated for each item. These are reported in Table 1and Table 2 in the results chapter. No group comparisons could be calculated because the response rate to the surveys was so low.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the types of experiences or issues abused women have with the justice system and how they cope with these experiences using concept mapping. A second phase was conducted to determine the extent that other abused women face similar issues or experiences, and if their coping mechanisms are similiar. The results of both phases will be reviewed in this chapter. First, results from Phase I which included the collection of responses, the structuring of responses and the development of the concept maps will be presented. In this phase the concept maps were examined to identify the themes within which each response fell. The resultant clusters will be reviewed. Finally, the results from Phase II, the prevalence study will be presented.

Phase I: Concept Mapping

Generation of Statements.

The first phase of this study during which responses were collected resulted in 105 issues or experiences that were reduced to 98 and 59 different ways the women identified that they coped with these experiences or issues. These responses were the basis for the development of the concept maps and the survey. The 98 experiences or issues the 59 ways of coping are presented in Appendix A.

Structuring of Responses.

The responses were sorted by women who attended groups for abused women. The women were asked to place the statements provided into groups that made sense to them. The sorted responses (or statements) were collected and examined. One completed sort was excluded because the sort contained at least one pile with over one third of all the responses. Trochim (1994) notes that "excluding lumpers from the analysis may make the results more interpretable" (p. 771). In addition, one complete set of sorted statements was not included in the analysis because it was not sorted by individuals, rather it was sorted by a group of 8 to 10 abused women. This sort is included in Appendix E

To develop the concept maps, the sorted data was analyzed using the Concept System computer software program designed by Trochim (1993). The analysis involved both MDS and cluster analysis to create a two-dimensional MDS solution (point map) and a map of clusters.

Multidimensional Scaling.

The MDS procedure resulted in a final stress value for each concept map. The stress value is a numerical index of the stability of the MDS solution and ranges from zero (perfectly stable) to one (perfectly unstable) (Daughtry & Kunkel, 1993). The index indicated the degree of departure of the observed or calculated similarity from the true similarity among items taken two at a time. The stress value then provides an index of the proportion of the total variance that accounts for error. The final stress value for the MDS of the experiences or issues was .30. The stress value for the MDS of the coping responses was .17. These stress values are considered acceptable. Daughtry and Kunkel note in their study using MDS that a stress value of .27 represented a "reasonably stable solution" (p. 319). In a recent study conducted by Trochim, Cook and Setze (1994) employing the concept mapping methodology the researchers accepted a similar stress value of .31 derived from a two-dimensional solution.

A two-dimensional MDS configuration is derived using the Concept System. Trochim (1989a) notes that any number of dimensions could be specified using MDS, however, a two-dimensional solution is easier to graph and understand. Kruskal and Wish (1978) state that:

> Since it is generally easier to work with two-dimensional configurations than those involving more dimensions, ease of use considerations are also important for decisions about dimensionality. For example, when an MDS configuration is desired primarily as the foundation on which to display clustering results, then a two-dimensional configuration is far more useful than one involving 3 or more dimensions. (p. 58)

Trochim (1989a) notes that he has found "the two-dimensional solution to be acceptable. Therefore, in concept mapping we usually use a two-dimensional multidimensional scaling analysis to map the ...statements into a two-dimensional plot" (p. 8).

The concept map of the 98 experiences or issues abused women have had with the justice system is presented in Figure 1. The concept map of the 59 different ways these women described that they coped with their experiences is presented in Figure 2. The responses are represented as points on the maps. The placement of the points is derived from the MDS solution. The distance between the points represents how often the statements were sorted together during the structuring phase by the women who volunteered to sort the statements. Those statements that are represented by points that are relatively close together represent items that were placed together in participant's sorts more frequently. A cluster analysis was then performed on the points found on the maps to assist in identifying themes.

Cluster Analysis.

The second quantitative analysis in the concept mapping process is called hierarchical cluster analysis. This analysis is "used to group individual statements on the map into clusters of statements which presumably reflect similar concepts " (Trochim, 1989a, p. 8). The Concept Mapping System (Trochim, 1993) uses Ward's hierarchical cluster analysis. Any number of cluster solutions are possible. Trochim states that "the task of the analyst is to decide how many clusters the statements should be grouped into for the final solution" (p. 8). Decisions about the number of clusters which best represents the conceptualization is based on statistical as well as conceptual considerations. The analysis begins by looking at all possible cluster solutions from about 3 to 20 clusters. Every time the analysis moves from one cluster level to the next, the statements are examined within each cluster to decide whether the grouping make sense. Trochim (1989a) notes that the results of the cluster analysis are generally less interpretable than the results from the multidimensional scaling. The key operative rule, Trochim notes is to "maintain the integrity of the multidimensional scaling analysis, that is, try to achieve a clustering solution which does not allow any overlapping clusters" (p. 9).

The Concept System (1993) provides a "bridging index" that is computed for each item in a cluster and for each cluster as it is derived to aid the analyst in determining the number of clusters. The bridging index is a number between 0 and 1. The higher the number, the more likely the more likely the item is a "bridge", that is, an item that was sorted with statements in various locations by different participants. The lower the number, the more likely it is that the item was sorted more frequently with the statements close to it on the map. An average bridging index is also calculated for each cluster. Clusters with lower bridging values generally contain statements more frequently sorted together (Trochim, 1993). The lower the bridging index is, then, the more likely the statements within it are coherent and related. The bridging indexes are presented in Table 1 and Table 2 along with the results of the survey.

The cluster analysis conducted generated two cluster maps. The final cluster solutions for both experiences/issues and coping were determined by the author through inspection of the structure participants imposed on the returned sorts, through reading and re-reading the original transcripts of interviews conducted, and by reflecting on the themes suggested by the women who volunteered to sort the statements. All possible cluster solutions from 19 down to 4 clusters were considered. Consideration was given to the items in each cluster and to those items contributing most to the uniqueness of each cluster. The bridging index was also utilized to help determine the uniqueness of each cluster. A final solution of 10 clusters was determined to be most appropriate for reflecting themes the women described when discussing their experiences or issues with the justice system, as well as themes suggested by the volunteer sorters. A final cluster solution of 6 clusters was determined to most appropriately reflect the themes they presented about how they coped with their experiences with the justice system.

Figure1: Concept Map of Issues and Experiences With The Justice System

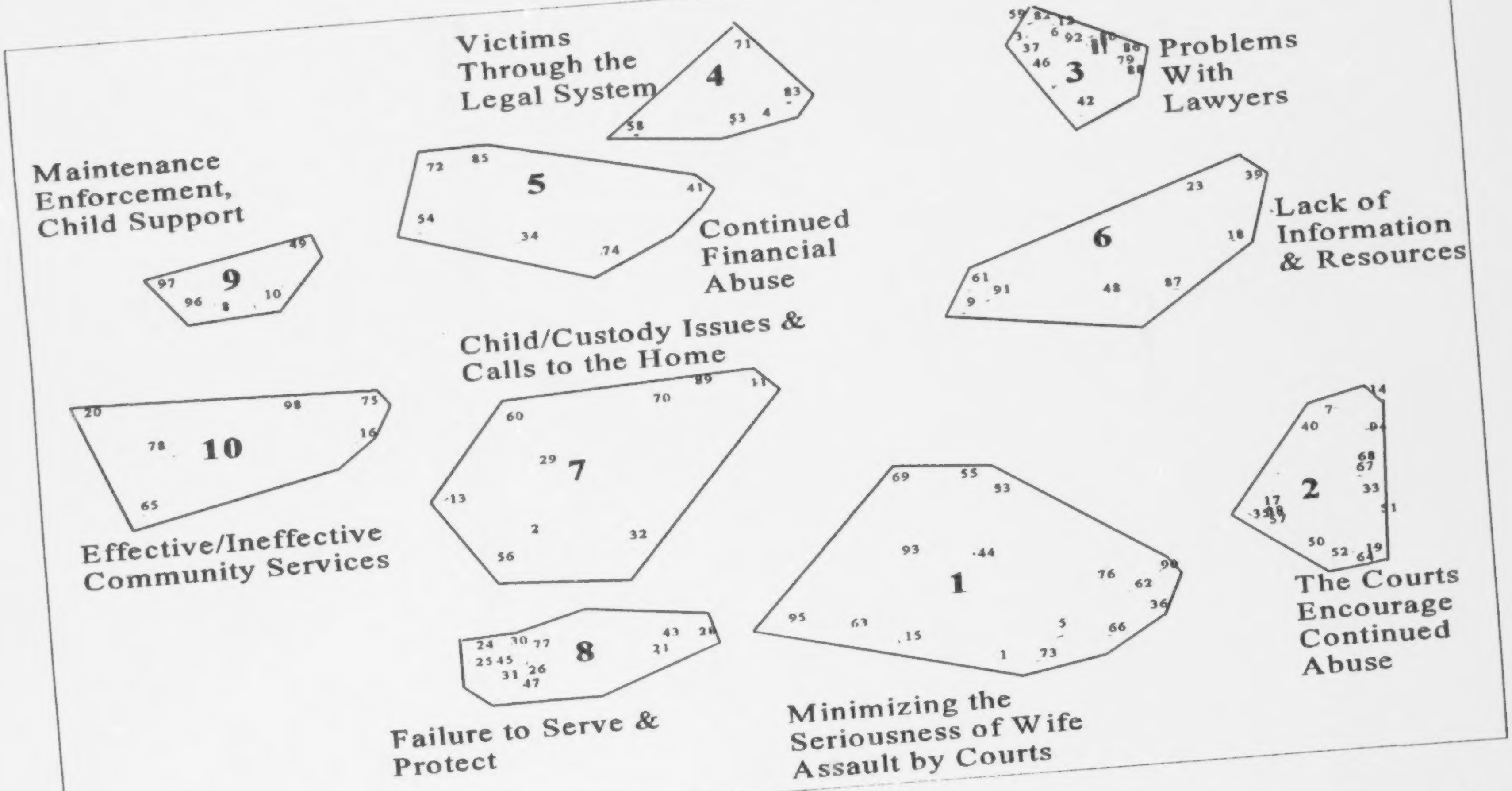
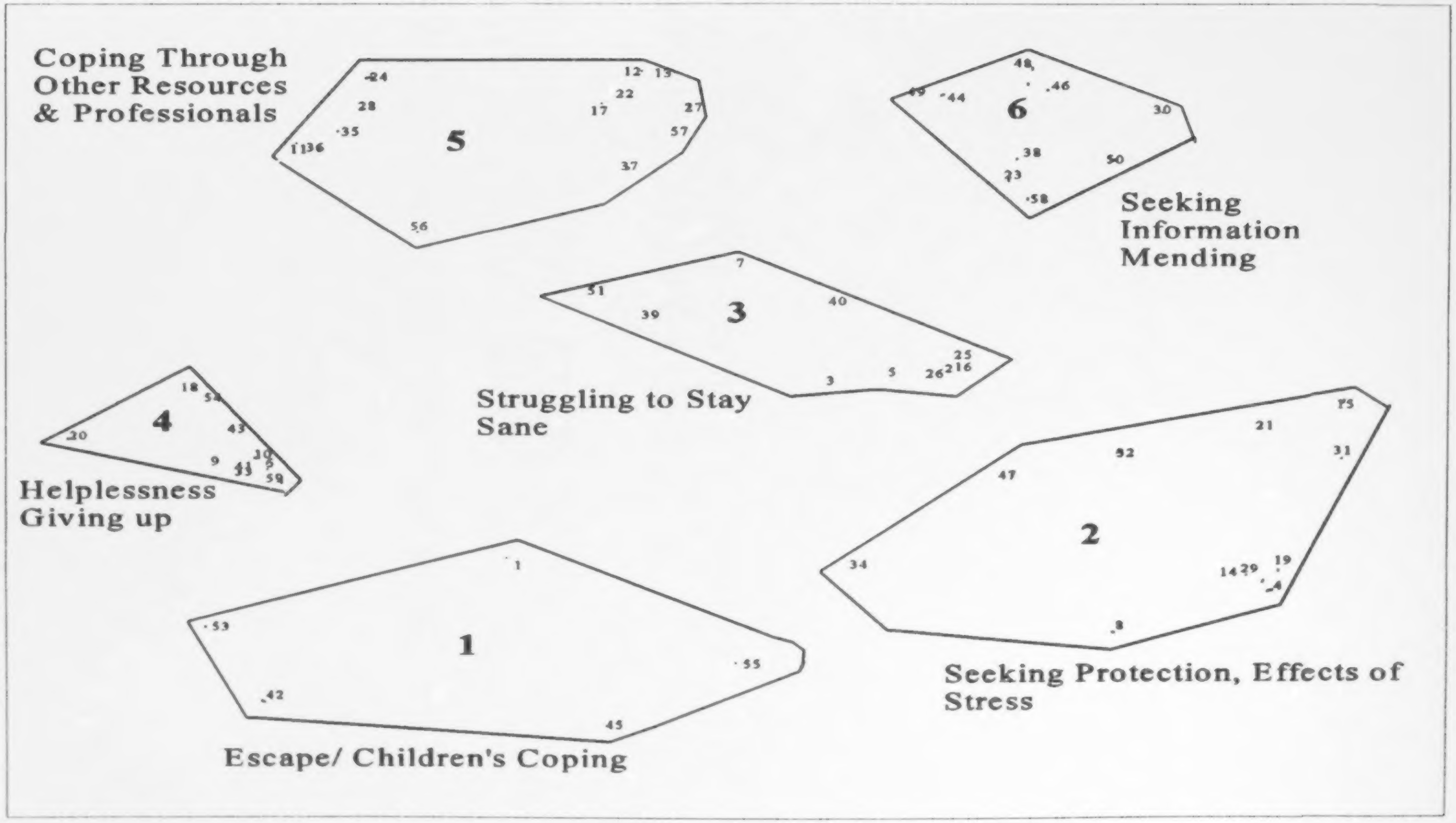

Victims Through the Legal System
4
71
83
53
4
58
Problems With Lawyers
3
59
82
12
6
92
37
46
42
79
86
Maintenance Enforcement, Child Support
9
97
96
8
10
49
5
72
85
54
34
74
41
Continued Financial Abuse
Lack of Information & Resources
6
23
39
18
61
91
9
48
87
Child/Custody Issues & Calls to the Home
7
60
70
89
11
29
13
2
56
32
10
20
98
75
16
78
65
Effective/Ineffective Community Services
2
14
7
40
94
68
67
33
51
17
50
52
19
64
The Courts Encourage Continued Abuse
1
69
55
53
93
44
76
62
99
36
95
63
15
5
66
1
73
8
24
30
77
25
45
31
26
47
43
28
21
Failure to Serve & Protect
Minimizing the Seriousness of Wife Assault by Courts

Figure 2: Concept Map of Coping


Coping Through
Other Resources
& Professionals
5
24
28
35
1136
56
12
13
22
17
27
57
37
6
48
46
44
30
38
23
50
58
Seeking
Information
Mending
3
7
51
39
40
25
3
5
26
216
Struggling to Stay
Sane
4
18
52
20
43
9
10
33
59
Helplessness
Giving up
2
75
21
31
52
47
34
14
29
19
4
8
Seeking Protection, Effects of
Stress
1
1
53
42
45
55
Escape/ Children's Coping

Other cluster solutions were deemed to either be too fragmented or too inclusive, making interpretation very confusing. Items found within each cluster or the final 10 and 6 cluster solutions, together with their individual bridging indexes, are found in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively. The items within each cluster of the cluster maps were examined to determine the central themes. The cluster names were chosen by returning to the sorts completed by the volunteer sorters who were asked to describe the theme of each pile. Through a process of continual comparison of the items in each cluster with the individual sorted items from each volunteer sorter, the themes they identified were utilized to name the clusters. The names of the clusters were chosen from the names of the themes the sorters provided. These names were then taken back to the group of women who sorted the statements. The final names for each cluster were arrived at through group consensus.

Cluster Maps

Experiences or Issues.

Cluster 1: Minimizing the seriousness of wife assault by the courts. Cluster one is located in the bottom right of the map. It contains items that reflected how the women felt courts, court officials and court procedures still minimize the seriousness of wife assault. Statements representative of this minimization include: "The courts still minimize the seriousness of family violence"; "If the abuser gets time the sentence is too lenient and not accurate", "Charges against my husband were dropped because I could not attend court"; and "I was not informed of his release date from jail and could not make safety plans. The only time I could relax was when he was in jail, but I wasn't told when or if he got a temporary release from jail so I wasn't safe." In this cluster concerns about mediation and protection issues were also included. Fears of intimidation and control by the abuser during mediation (#93) and the inability to get protection orders were included (#5 and #73). Decisions by judges that were described as being unfair were also included (#55 and #69). Finally, obstacles to getting charges laid or getting police assistance were included in this cluster (#95, #90 and #15).

Cluster 2: The courts encourage continued abuse. Cluster 2 is located next to cluster 1 and has a cluster average of .33 (bridging index). The items in this cluster reflect the women's feelings of confusion, intimidation and lack of information about the legal process (#14, #38, #19 and #68) as well as items that describe how the women felt they were not believed (#33), that carelessness occurred thereby further endangering them (#40) and a lack of concern and attention occurred by court officials (#17. #51, #35, #50, #64, #67, #68 and # 94). Examples of statements included in this cluster are: "Important witnesses were not on the subpoena list and therefore were not called" and " My victim impact statement was not read by the judge prior to sentencing, and therefore the sentence was too light".

Cluster 3: Problems with lawyers. This cluster had the overall lowest bridging index of .12 reflecting the consistency with which the statements were sorted together. Two items had an index of 0.00 indicating they were sorted together by every volunteer sorter. These were: "I fired my lawyer and he wouldn't give my file to the new lawyer so we had to start all over again" and "I had to threaten to take my lawyer to the Law Society before he would return my phone calls or get back to me". Other statements in this cluster reflect frustrations the women experienced with their lawyers (#82, #37, #59, #42, and # 46) as well as verbal abuse by lawyers ("My lawyer told me to learn to live with the threats from my husband" and "My lawyer verbally abused me; he yelled and swore at me"). Finally, a lack of caring by lawyers was included in this cluster ("My lawyer doesn't care/doesn't listen to me").

Cluster 4: Victims through the legal system. This cluster contained only five items with, it seemed, little conceptual similarity. It was difficult to assign a name for this cluster. The statements were: "His lawyer manages to delay court hearings causing me to return to court frequently and increasing my lawyer fees"; "My ex-husband abused my lawyer. My lawyer didn't believe me until this occurred"; "I needed to write up my own affidavits to save money and make sure important information was not left out"; "I had no income, no one suggested legal aid. the lawyers were aware I couldn't fight very long in court" and "My ex-husband used the Law Society as a method of abuse. Because my lawyer did a good job for me, he complained to the Law Society about my lawyer and they disciplined her. When I tried to intervene they told me I was irrelevant to the case". All of these statements seemed to reflect the women's feelings of being victims of the legal system. The bridging index for this cluster was .40 but considerable debate over the central theme and the name existed.

Cluster 5: Continued financial abuse. Cluster 6 contained six items that reflected the issues of poverty and debt. Examples of statements are: "The women are left with high legal bills due to the man's abuse"; "He claimed bankruptcy and left me with the debts. Because I was married to him I had to assume his debts"; "Legal aid only provides so much money which is not enough for abused women's needs", and "My husband saw a psychologist who stated he was too depressed to work and therefore he doesn't pay child support". One item didn't seem to fit well into this cluster. That was, "I didn't go to a doctor because no one told me to and therefore he was acquitted because of a lack of evidence". The bridging index of this item was .74 indicating that it was likely a bridging item that may have been sorted into various clusters.

Cluster 6: Lack of support, information and resources. The items in this cluster represented concepts that illustrated that a lack of support, information and resources are felt by the women when they use the justice system. Examples of items sorted into this cluster are: "I cannot afford to go to court to seek child support"; "Restraining orders are too costly because you need a lawyer"; "Women who need legal aid have to line up at 6 or 7 am and hope to get their case heard that day. This is hard when it's cold and you have to take your kids along (often on the bus)"; and "Information is not coordinated between all professionals involved therefore information gets missed (ie: doctor's report not filed and could not be used as evidence)". The item that had the highest bridging index had to do with bias by the courts and lawyers where one woman stated that courts and lawyers see women as unintelligent, hysterical and exaggerating. The bridging index of this item was .58, again indicating that it may have been sorted into various clusters and be a bridging item.

Cluster 7: Child issues, custody, calls for assistance. This cluster is situated in the center of the map. Many of the items in this cluster illustrated issues the women described with children (custody and access) and issues surrounding the home. Examples included: "We trade the children at a police station because I have a restraining order and the police are rude and obnoxious and have told me they are not a babysitting service"; "My husband abuses the children during visitations but because the child is too young to serve as a credible witness no action can be taken"; "Judges don't take into account whether or not child support is made when granting visitation rights"; and "He has supervised visits with the children until after he has received counselling. He only went three times and now wants the supervision removed". Calls for assistance are represented by the statements: "The police attended my call but my husband kept interfering while the police were there and I was too scared to pursue charges because he threatened me" and " I did not speak enough English to call the police or ask for help". One item again, did not seem to fit in this cluster. That was "He was charged, arrested and convicted. His sentence was probation with no contact with me. He frequently breaches this and ends up back in court but there are no consequences". This could have been sorted here because it has to do with harassment around the home. The bridging index was .82 indicating it was likely a bridging item.

Cluster 8: Failure to serve and protect. This cluster was quite homogeneous and had the second lowest overall bridging index of .23. The items in this cluster consistently reflected issues the women described with police such as "the police didn't take actions on threats made" (#21); or "lay kidnapping charges against the husband when he kidnapped the children" (#43); "the police knew my husband and therefore he wasn't charged" (#24); and "the police did not lay charges until after they saw the bruises" (#31). The item with the lowest bridging index (.11) in this cluster was "When I reported my husband was driving without a licence when he had the children, the police asked who I was and then told me they don't get involved in family matters". This statement exemplifies the frustration expressed within this cluster. The name the women chose for the cluster also reflects this frustration.

Cluster 9: Maintenance enforcement and child support issues. This cluster contained only five items in which maintenance enforcement or child support was specifically mentioned in each statement. Examples of items are: "He is not paying child support as ordered by the courts"; and "He has delayed maintenance support payments through delays in court hearings".

Cluster 10: Effective/ineffective community services. This last cluster contained four items which reflected positive experiences with the justice system. Examples of these are: "I got a good response for the police"; and "My lawyer was able to work with me as an equal; a good relationship occurred". Two items were more related to shelters and were not positive, however. "I had no place to go to get away from him because I live in the country and there's no shelter nearby" had a bridging index of .82 and could be considered to be a bridging item. "He tried to get me charged with kidnapping when I took the children to the shelter" was likely a bridging item even though the bridging index of it was not extremely high at .59.

Other Information. In addition to naming the clusters, other meaningful information can be extracted by visually examining the map. Daughtry and Kunkel (1994) state that "initial examination of the map involves attempts to identify implicit dimensional axes around which points on the map may be configured" (p. 320). Inspection of the cluster map reflecting the experiences or issues abused women have with the justice system suggests that, in general, these issues are organized along two dimensions: items that reflect issues with professionals directly involved with the justice system and court practices, and those that surround child/custody and financial issues. Moving to the far left of the map are statements that might be interpreted as more empowering to those on the far right that might be interpreted as disempowering ("the courts encourage continued abuse"). This becomes apparent when contrasting the most extreme statements such as "The lawyer was able to work with me as an equal; a good relationship occurred" to "I had no idea about legal proceedings or legal aid".

Coping With The Justice System.

The following clusters contain coping responses. In answering this question many of the women responded how their experiences with the justice system had impacted their lives. These were included in the coping statements.

Cluster 1: Escape/reference to children's coping. This cluster had the highest bridging index and contained five items with, it seemed, little conceptual clarity. It was difficult to assign a label to this cluster. The statements seemed to reflect some of the effect on the children ("My kids withdrew and my oldest one has got violent with her sister. She even wrote a suicide letter", "It hurt to have to tell the kids that their dad got off charges because they were there, they saw the attack"). The other three items appeared to be bridging items. These were: "I want to leave the city to escape the abuse", "I never bank on winning for an outcome"; and "I would have coped better if the police had laid charges". The theme of two of these three could be interpreted to have to do with coping through escape. This cluster was judged to lack the most clarity.

Cluster 2: Seeking protection and effects of stress. The items in this cluster reflected themes of hiding and seeking protection and assistance to feel safe (items #4, #14, #29 and #34). Some of the items also suggested themes of the effects of stress on the women. These examples included: "I needed to quit school/job to cope. I could not cope with additional stress"; "I coped by becoming numb, not feeling"; "I needed to take sleeping pills"; and "I needed to take prescription drugs for depression and anxiety". The bridging indexes of all statements except for one were under .30 indicating good conceptual clarity of this cluster. The one response that had a bridging index over .30 was "I get angry at the system". This item was likely a bridging item.

Cluster 3: Struggling to stay sane. This cluster has an average bridging index of .01 indicating almost universally the items in this cluster were sorted together. Four items individually had a bridging index of 0.00. These were: "I cry a lot"; "I get very depressed"; "I feel I'm going insane"; and "I feel very stressed". The theme of this cluster reflects the women's struggles to cope with their experiences with the justice system. "Coping is hard, I don't cope" perhaps exemplifies how much difficulty the women have in their struggles with the justice system. "The cruelty, mind games leave one with no self-esteem" suggest the effects of these struggles.

Cluster 4: Helplessness, giving up. The cluster average for this cluster is .16 and also indicates this cluster holds good conceptual clarity. Examples of items in this cluster are: "I hide, I'm embarrassed, I don't want people to know I'm abused"; "I coped by closing everything up inside of me"; "I coped by going back to him and I tried not to upset him"; and "I dropped all court charges, it was easier to live with him again and know what he was up to". One item exemplified the most extreme way to give up; "I thought of suicide as a way out". Another items reflected an extreme reaction to feeling helpless; "I thought of killing him to end the abuse".

Cluster 5: Coping through turning to other resources and professionals. This cluster contained items that reflected the theme of coping through utilizing other resources and professional such as shelters (#11), police (#35, #36, #28 and #56), and other persons to talk to (#17, #12, #13, and #22). Financial support (#24), support offered through the children, school, or job (#27) was also included in this cluster. Finally, incarceration was mentioned as a way of coping ("It would have helped me if he had spent time in jail").

Cluster 6: Seeking information/mending. The final cluster indicates that the women coped more positively through finding out information ("I coped through finding out information for myself. I searched the libraries to see if I had a case"; "I read books about abused women to get a better understanding"). Mending occurred through journalling

(#50) and through advocating for other abused women (#49). Prayers were also mentioned as a way of coping (#23). Relying on one's own abilities and planning a life without him (#46) was included in this cluster. The essence of this cluster is perhaps best reflected by the statement, "I still have hope for the future" (#30).

Other Information. As noted before, other meaningful information can be extracted by visual examination of the map. The top of the map includes themes of seeking information, utilizing other resources and professional and mending. On the bottom half of the map, taking more space, are the negative effects of coping with experiences with the justice system and reflect themes of helplessness, hopelessness, giving up and struggling to stay sane.

Phase II: Prevalence Study

The Survey

To address the second research question a survey instrument was developed using the statements collected to determine the prevalence of the experiences or issues and coping among a larger sample of abused women across Alberta. The survey consisted of three parts: demographic data, experiences or issues, and coping statements. Frequency data was calculated for the experiences or issues and coping statements. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the responses endorsed as applicable using "1" for applies a little, "2" applies quite a bit, and "3" applies extremely well to my situation.

Frequency Data

Frequencies were calculated for each of the statements collected from Phase I (concept mapping) of this study. These data are presented in Table 1 and in Table 2. Table 1 presents the extent to which other abused women responded that the issues or experiences with the justice system were applicable to their own issues or experiences. Table 2 presents the extent to which other abused women endorsed the coping responses

Table 1: Bridging Indexes & Prevalence of Experiences or Issues by Clusters

Statements	% Endorsing Statements , Means & Standard Deviations **, bridging indexes			
	Bridging index	% Endorsing applicable	Means	Standard Deviations
Cluster 1: Minimizing the seriousness of wife assault by courts				
15. A big obstacle to getting charges laid is a lack of evidence, especially with emotional abuse.	.53	64%	2.5	.7
36. The waiting period to go to court on abuse charges was too long and allowed for threats, harassment and further abuse to occur while I waited.	.40	45%	2.1	.9
62. If the abuser gets time the sentence is too lenient and not accurate (ie: if he gets 6 months he only serves 2/3 time due to remission).	.41	44%	2.5	.8
93. If you go to mediation with the man it's torture because you can't say anything. The woman is intimidated and controlled while he is present.	.40	38%	2.1	.9
73. I couldn't get a restraining order because he didn't hurt me bad enough.	.42	33%	2.0	1.0
66. The courts still minimize the seriousness of family violence. My husband did not go to jail, he only got $150.00 fine for beating me.	.45	31%	2.4	.8
95. The police could not help me when he was harassing me because I didn't have a restraining order, I couldn't afford one.	.53	31%	2.1	.9
5. There is too long of a delay in getting a peace bond.	.41	27%	2.2	1.0
63. I was not informed of his release date from jail and could not make safety plans. The only time I could relax was when he was in jail, but I wasn't told when or if he got a temporary release from jail so I wasn't safe.	.56	20%	2.2	.9

69. When we finally settled, the judge said he was being "generous" with child support and therefore he didn't have to backpay the support he owed for a year while waiting court settlement.	.42	16%	2.1	1.1
44. My husband and his friends locked me out of the house. If I left in front of witnesses that means I abandoned the house and children, and would lose the children, the house, everything.	.40	11%	2.2	1.0
76. I had to go to court in a small town and now everyone knows about my marriage. I had to move to get away.	.37	11%	2.0	1.0
90. The bruises from the beating were gone by the time we went to court and therefore there was no evidence. He got off with no conviction.	.35	9%	1.8	.8
1. Charges against my husband were dropped because I could not attend court.	.30	7%	1.8	1.0
55. The judge granted him my car when he takes the children for visitations.	.43	0	0	0
Cluster 2: The courts encourage continued abuse				
14. I had no idea about legal proceedings or legal aid.	.50	62%	1.9	.9
19. I felt threatened, confused and intimidated by the court process.	.30	62%	2.0	.8
52. Not enough information was given to me, no one explained court procedures to me. I felt people were making decisions on my behalf without consulting me.	.41	55%	1.9	1.0
64. No follow-up has occurred following the court decisions. It should be mandatory for the man to get help and someone should ensure he follows through with court decisions.	.31	53%	2.7	.7
50. His mental health was not taken into account by the judge because no assessment was done. He was mentally ill.	.35	44%	2.1	.8
68. I was too afraid I would do something wrong in court that would enable him to get off. The crown prosecutor could have briefed me about what to expect therefore alleviating that fear.	.27	35%	2.5	.7

51. I was not asked by the judge to validate his story, was not allowed in the courtroom during his testimony. He lied on his affidavit. He perjured himself in court.	.34	31%	2.5	.7
40. The clerk of the court is sometimes careless, not enough attention is placed on some issues that could make a significant difference on the court orders (ie: they may miss a point that places the victim in danger).	.24	27%	1.9	.9
67. The crown prosecutor did not show up prior to court to meet with me; no one informed me what was happening.	.28	25%	2.5	.8
17. My victim impact statement was not read by the judge prior to sentencing, and therefore the sentence was too light.	.24	22%	2.1	.9
38. I felt discrimination occurred by court officials.	.44	22%	2.1	.9
94. I didn't have enough notice to go to court.	.27	22%	1.9	1.0
33. The judge didn't believe my story	.31	20%	2.0	1.0
57. A home assessment was ordered by the judge but the waiting period for these is too long and it can be delayed if both parties (and lawyers) don't agree on the same person.	.32	13%	2.7	.8
7. Important witnesses were not on the subpena list and therefore were not called.	.44	9%	2.2	1.1
35. In court we had an interpreter who interpreted for both sides and took his side. Each person should have their own interpreter.	.34	4%	1.5	.7
Cluster 3: Problems with lawyers				
82. I believe my lawyer recognized I was under duress, but wasn't prepared to do anything about it.	.02	24%	1.7	.9
46. His lawyer said I used cruelty in court and attempted to reverse things that made me look like the abuser.	.21	22%	1.9	.8
12. My lawyer doesn't care; doesn't listen to me.	.04	22%	1.8	.9
3. My lawyer informed me that his first responsibility was to the judge and then to the client.	.10	16%	1.7	.9

59. I got the impression that the lawyer felt my case was trivial because no children were involved and little money was involved.	.20	15%	1.8	.9
37. My own lawyer did not show up for court, another one did who was unfamiliar with my case.	.16	13%	2.3	1.0
6. The lawyers made an agreement out of court and therefore no conviction occurred (they plea bargained).	.26	13%	2.4	.8
92. I had to threaten to take my lawyer to the Law Society before he would return my phone calls or get back to me.	.00	13%	2.4	1.0
80. My lawyer verbally abused me; he yelled and swore at me.	.04	9%	2.0	1.0
84. Even though various lawyers did not act for me, they charged me for reading the file and would not return it until I payed. I had to give them a retainer of usually $1,000.00 that was not all returned.	.07	9%	2.8	.4
81. My lawyer signed an affidavit that was not true.	.04	7%	3.0	0
86. My lawyer told me to learn to live with the threats from my husband.	.11	7%	2.0	1.2
79. My husband who beat me was a lawyer. The lawyer representing me took frequent phone calls and instruction from him.	.04	4%	2.0	1.4
88. I fired my lawyer and he wouldn't give my file to the new lawyer so we had to start all over again.	.00	4%	2.0	1.4
42. My husband was a lawyer and therefore other lawyers and police were afraid to represent me.	.48	1%	3.0	0
Cluster 4: Victims through the legal system				
4. His lawyer manages to delay court hearings causing me to return to court frequently and increasing my lawyer fees.	.33	38%	2.2	.9
53. I needed to write up my own affidavits to save money and make sure important information was not left out.	.41	25%	1.9	1.0
83. I had no income, no one suggested legal aid, the lawyers were aware I couldn't fight very long in court.	.34	20%	2.4	.8

71. My ex-husband abused my lawyer. My lawyer didn't believe me until this occurred.	.34	11%	2.2	1.0
58. My ex-husband used the Law Society as a method of abuse against me. Because my lawyer did a good job for me, he complained to the Law Society about my lawyer and they disciplined her. When I tried to intervene they told me I was irrelevant to the case.	.59	5%	2.0	1.0
Cluster 5: Continued financial abuse				
41. The women are left with high legal bills due to the man's abuse.	.40	65%	2.4	.8
72. Legal aid only provides so much money which is not enough for abused women's needs.	.76	55%	2.3	.8
74. He claimed bankruptcy and left me with the debts. Because I was married to him I had to assume his debts.	.46	25%	2.4	.9
34. I didn't go to a doctor because no one told me to and therefore he was acquitted because of a lack of evidence.	.74	20%	1.6	.9
54. My husband saw a psychologist who stated he was too depressed to work and therefore he doesn't pay child support.	.61	15%	2.5	.8
85. My husband payed child support to his lawyer who passed it onto my lawyer who had to give it to legal aid because I owed money.	.60	4%	3.0	0
Cluster 6: Lack of support, information and other resources				
61. Restraining orders are too costly because you need a lawyer to get one.	.43	56%	2.4	.8
23. I was not aware of when he was being served with the divorce/legal papers. I was unable to make safety plans. He came to my house after being served and he was very angry.	.49	47%	1.7	.8
39. Generally there's an attitude that is recognized by lawyers that the courts have a bias towards women that sees them as unintelligent, hysterical and exaggerating, therefore they are further victimized.	.58	47%	2.0	.9

18. Information is not coordinated between all professional involved therefore information gets missed (ie: doctor's report not filed and could not be used as evidence).	.46	33%	2.1	1.0
9. I cannot afford to go to court to seek child support.	.38	33%	2.3	.8
91. Women who need legal aid have to line up at 6 or 7 am and hope to get their case heard that day. This is hard when it's cold and you have to take your kids along (often on the bus). There's no where to leave them.	.41	29%	2.4	.9
48. My ex-husband threatened the police/lawyers with court action which scared them.	.55	15%	2.3	.9
87. I have to travel to another province to go back to court and stay in hotels. Many court delays have cost me lots of money.	.40	0	0	0
Cluster 7: Child issues/custody and calls for assistance				
32. The police attended my call but my husband kept interfering while the police were there and I was too scared to pursue charges because he threatened me.	.40	33%	1.7	.8
29. My husband abused the children during visitations but because the child is too young to serve as a credible witness no action can be taken.	.51	31%	2.1	.9
2. I was told that continued harassment by my husband was a family matter because he has access to the children	.46	27%	1.9	.9
11. Judges don't take into account whether or not child support is made when granting visitation rights.	.49	24%	2.3	.9
60. He was charged, arrested and convicted. His sentence was probation with no contact with me. He frequently breaches this and ends up back in court but there are no consequences.	.82	18%	2.1	.9
70. He has supervised visits with the children until after he has received counselling. He only went three times and now wants the supervision removed.	.53	13%	1.9	1.1
89. The day my husband went to court I had to sneak back into the house to get clothes for the kids.	.51	5%	2.3	1.2

56. We trade children at a police station because I have a restraining order and the police are rude and obnoxious and have told me they are not a babysitting service.	.43	4%	3.0	0
13. I did not speak enough English to call the police or ask for help.	.79	1%	1.0	0
Cluster 8: Failure to serve and protect				
21. The police did not take action on threats made by my husband.	.30	47%	2.2	.9
28. Information between police is not passed on to the next shift or to other officers.	.40	42%	2.3	.9
45. The police have a gender bias to believe the man, especially if he is a professional.	.19	33%	1.8	.9
27. I was afraid to call the police because I know them and am embarrassed.	.22	31%	1.6	.7
31. The police did not lay charges until I showed them the bruises.	.23	24%	2.2	1.0
26. When I called the police did not show up.	.19	21%	1.9	.9
25. The police tried to "buddy' with my husband and took him for coffee. They did not lay charges.	.18	20%	2.2	.8
47. I was told I was abusing the law due to frequent phone calls to the police.	.17	16%	1.9	.9
77. When I reported my husband was driving without a licence when he had the children, The police asked who I was, and then told me they don't get involved in family matters.	.11	15%	1.8	.9
24. The police knew my husband and therefore he wasn't charged.	.16	13%	2.0	.8
43. My husband kidnapped the children. The police did not lay charges.	.34	7%	2.3	1.0

30. My husband was escorted back to the house by the police and he took his belongings plus other things needed by me and my children and he attacked me while the police were present.	.25	7%	1.3	.5
Cluster 9: Maintenance enforcement/child support				
10. He hides his income (claimed bankruptcy/does not file correct income tax) and therefore does not pay adequate child support.	.59	42%	2.5	.8
8. He is not paying child support as ordered by the courts.	.64	33%	2.6	.7
49. He had delayed maintenance support payments through delays in court hearings.	.72	33%	2.6	.7
97. My ex-husband phoned maintenance enforcement telling them we had got back together. They were going to close the file. I needed to prove to them we were still separated.	.58	20%	1.7	1.0
96. In order to get maintenance enforcement set up I had to provide them with information like his social insurance number. He hid this information from me.	.64	18%	2.2	.9
Cluster 10: Effective/ineffective community resources				
65. I got a good response from the police.	.69	64%	2.5	.7
20. The lawyer was able to work with me as an equal; a good relationship occurred.	.15	55%	2.0	.9
98. When I reported to child welfare that my children's health was being affected when they went to visit their father, they said they could not act because it was a custody suit.	.66	22%	2.3	.9
22. My lawyer referred me to a group for abused women.	.15	20%	2.1	.7
75. I had no place to go to get away from him because I live in the country and there's no shelter nearby.	.82	13%	2.1	1.1
16. He tried to get me charged with kidnapping when I took the children to a shelter.	.59	9%	2.2	.8
78. My husband pleaded guilty right away and got 2 years in jail for this.	1.00	4%	3.0	0

Table 2 Bridging Indexes & Prevalence of Coping Statements by Clusters

Statement	% Endorsing Statements, Means & Standard Deviations**, bridging indexes			
	Bridging index	% Endorsing Applicable	Means	Standard Devaitions
Cluster 1: Escape/reference to children's coping				
1. I want to leave the city to escape the abuse.	0.46	71%	2.4	.8
45. I never bank on winning for an outcome.	0.41	67%	2.1	.9
55. I would have coped better if the police had laid charges.	0.86	40%	2.2	.8
42. My kids withdrew and my oldest one got violent with her sisters. She even wrote a suicide not.	0.68	38%	1.9	.8
53. It hurt to have to tell my kids that their dad got off charges because they were there, they saw the attack.	0.72	35%	2.0	.9
Cluster 2: Seeking protection/Stress effects.				
47. I am over-cautious now.	0.16	87%	2.4	.8
32. I coped by becoming numb, not feeling.	0.19	84%	2.2	.9
15. I get angry at the system.	0.5	82%	2.3	.8
8. I needed to quit school/job to cope. I couldn't cope with additional stress.	0.17	56%	2.2	.9
19. I coped by giving it back to him--mainly verbal abuse.	0.27	53%	1.8	.8
21. I needed to take sleeping pills.	0.33	49%	2.1	.9
31. I needed prescription drugs for depression and anxiety.	0.35	49%	2.6	.6
4. I borrow money from parents to feed the kids.	0.36	47%	2.5	.8
29. I have a domestic violence emergency response system that I rely on for protection.	0.26	42%	1.9	.9
14. I moved in with my parents for protection.	0.27	27%	2.3	.9
34. I hide at the lake when I can afford it.	0.31	75%	2.5	1.0
Cluster 3: Struggling to stay sane				
25. The cruelty, mind games leave one with no self-esteem.	0.01	95%	2.8	.5
16. I feel very stressed	0	93%	2.2	.9
2. I cry a lot.	0	91%	2.2	.9

26. I get very depressed.	0	91%	2.4	.8
5. I feel constantly frustrated.	0.03	91%	2.1	.9
3. Coping is hard; I don't cope	0.01	91%	2.1	.9
40. I feel I'm going insane.	0	82%	2.1	.9
7. I can't sleep.	0.02	80%	2.2	.8
51. I get sick frequently.	0.02	69%	1.9	.9
39. I ate a lot.	0.02	49%	2.1	.9
Cluster 4: Helplessness/giving up				
18. I coped by closing everything up inside me.	0.04	80%	2.1	.9
10. I live in constant fear.	0.13	76%	1.9	.9
6. I hide, I'm embarrassed, I don't want people to know I'm abused.	0.08	75%	2.1	.9
59. My friends and family did a lot of judging and made me feel responsible.	0.16	62%	1.9	.9
20. I thought of suicide as a way out.	0.06	58%	2.3	.8
41. I thought of killing him to end the abuse.	0.21	58%	2.3	.8
43. I coped by going back to him and I tried not to upset him.	0.21	55%	2.3	.8
9. My children get physically ill.	0.31	49%	1.9	.9
33. We all sleep in one room with the drapes drawn, and door latched.	0.18	40%	1.8	.9
54. I dropped all court charges, it was easier to live with him and know what he was up to.	0.26	20%	2.5	.8
Cluster 5: Coping through other resources and professionals				
12. I talked to friends.	0.08	93%	2.3	.8
13. I went to group; found talking to others in the same situation helpful; healing occurred through sharing.	0.08	91%	2.7	.5
24. Financial support is very important. The women need a trust fund to bridge them over.	1	89%	2.5	.8
22. I coped through counselling.	0.14	85%	2.5	.7
27. My kids, school, job keep me going.	0.14	85%	2.5	.7
17. I made safety plans with the help of others.	0.18	78%	2.1	.8

57. It would have helped me if he had spent some time in jail.	0.72	60%	2.4	.8
56. It helped me cope when the police removed him from the house.	0.35	55%	2.6	.7
28. The consistency of the spousal violence follow-up teams was helpful.	0.23	47%	2.0	.8
11. I went to a shelter and then to a second stage housing. This helped a lot.	0.28	40%	2.0	.9
35. I coped by keeping in touch with the police; the police became familiar with my case.	0.26	40%	2.2	.8
36. I coped better when the police informed me of his whereabouts.	0.24	40%	2.0	1.0
37. I went to the Law Society to report my lawyer.	0.2	7%	2.5	1.0
Cluster 6: Seeking information/mending				
30. I still have hope for the future.	0.3	93%	2.4	.8
46. I relied on my own abilities; I planned a life without him.	0.18	87%	2.2	.9
23. I used prayers to cope.	0.21	78%	2.4	.8
49. I got involved in advocating for abused women.	0.12	65%	2.1	.9
58. My doctor helped, I talked to him.	0.26	64%	2.3	.7
48. I started to save all information from courts, lawyers, etc, and I photocopied everything.	0.16	60%	2.5	.8
52. I read books about abused women to get a better understanding.	0.16	58%	2.4	.8
50. I coped by writing in a journal, it helps me reflect.	0.24	49%	2.0	.9
44. I coped through finding out information for myself. I searched the libraries to see if I had a case.	0.13	47%	2.0	.9
38. I bought a dog for protection.	0.17	24%	2.4	.9

**Means and Standard Deviations are calculated on the answers that indicated applicable only.

as applicable to their own coping. Both tables are organized so that the statements are presented within each cluster and the statements that received the highest rates of endorsement within each cluster are noted first. The bridging indexes from the concept mapping analysis and means and standard deviations of the responses endorsed as applicable in the survey are also included in the tables.

Issues or Experiences by Clusters.

The statement that received the highest percentage of agreement with as being applicable by respondents was in the cluster named "continued financial abuse". This was: "The women are left with high legal bills due to the man's abuse". Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents noted this was applicable to their own situation. Within this cluster one other statement was endorsed frequently as applicable by respondents. This was: "Legal aid only provides so much money which is not enough for abused women's needs" (55 %).

In cluster 2, "the courts encourage continued abuse" several responses were endorsed frequently by respondents. "I felt threatened, confused and intimidated by the court process" was seen as applicable by 62% of respondents. Sixty-two percent (62%) also endorsed the statement "I had no idea about legal proceedings or legal aid". Fifty-five (55%) agreed with "Not enough information was given to me, no one explained court procedures to me. I felt people were making decisions on my behalf without consulting me". A further 53% indicated that "no follow-up has occurred following the court decisions. It should be mandatory for the man to get help and someone should ensure he follows through with court decisions". Finally, 44% agreed that "his mental health was not taken into account by the judge because no assessment was done. He was mentally ill". The remainder of the statements in this cluster received an agreement rate of 4% ("In court we had an interpreter who interpreted for both sides and took his side. Each person should have their own interpreter.") to 35% ("I was too afraid I would do something wrong in court that would enable him to get off. The crown prosecutor could have briefed me about what to expect therefore alleviating that fear").

In cluster 1 ("minimizing the seriousness of wife assault by courts") one response received a high rate of endorsement as applicable by respondents: "A big obstacle to getting charges laid is a lack of evidence, especially with emotional abuse" (64%). Two other statements were agreed to by almost half of the respondents. These were: "The waiting period to go to court on abuse charges was too long and allowed for threats, harassment and further abuse to occur while I waited" (45%), and "If the abuser gets time the sentence is too lenient and not accurate (ie; if he gets 6 months he only serves 2/3 time due to remission)" (44%). One statement received a rating of 100% as not applicable by all respondents: "The judge granted him my car when he takes the children for visitations". Other statements in this cluster were endorsed as applicable by 7% ("Charges were dropped because I could not attend court") to 38% of respondents ("If you go to mediation with the man it's torture because you can't say anything. The woman is intimidated and controlled while he is present").

Cluster 10, ("effective/ineffective community services") contained two items that were endorsed by more than half of respondents as being applicable to their situation. Sixty-four percent (64%) of respondents indicated they "got a good response from the police" and 55% indicated their "lawyer was able to work with me as an equal; a good relationship occurred". At the same time only 4% (n=2) women agreed with the statement "My husband pleaded guilty right away".

In cluster 6, ("lack of support, information and resources") 56% of respondents indicated that "Restraining orders are too costly because you need a lawyer to get one". Almost half endorsed, "I was not aware of when he was being served with the divorce/legal papers. I was unable to make safety plans. He came to my house after being served and he was angry" (47%). One response was noted not to be applicable by any respondents: "I have to travel to another province to go back to court and stay in hotels. Many court delays have cost me lots of money". The other statements ranged from 15% agreement ("My ex-husband threatened the police/lawyers with court action which scared them.") to 33% ("I cannot afford to go to court to seek child support").

Cluster 8 ("failure to serve and protect") contained items pertaining to policing issues. Only two items were endorsed by almost half of the respondents as applicable to their situations. These were: "The police did not take action on threats made by my husband" (47%), and "Information between police is not passed onto the next shift or to other officers" (42%). The other items in this cluster were endorsed by 7% ("My husband kidnapped the children. The police did not lay charges") to 33% of respondents ("The police have a gender bias to believe the man, especially if he is a professional").

Maintenance enforcement and child support issues in cluster 9 had a rate of endorsement from 18% ("In order to get maintenance enforcement set up I had to provide them with information like his social insurance number. He hid this information from me") to 42% ("He hides his income (claimed bankruptcy/does not file correct income tax) and therefore does not pay adequate child support."). "He is not paying child support as ordered by the courts" was endorsed as applicable by 33% of respondents, as was "He has delayed maintenance support payments through delays in court hearings".

Cluster 4 ("Victims through the legal system") only contained five items. One was endorsed by 38% as applicable to their situation, "His lawyer manages to delay court hearings causing me to return to court frequently and increasing my lawyer fees". The other four items were not endorsed by a high percentage of respondents as applicable.

In cluster 7, ("Child issues/custody and calls for assistance") four items were endorsed by approximately one-third of respondents as applicable. These were, "The police attended my call but my husband kept interfering while the police were there and I was too scared to pursue charges because he threatened me" (33%); "My husband abused the children during visitations but because the child is too young to serve as a credible witness no action can be taken" (31%); "I was told that continued harassment by my husband was a family matter because he has access to the children" (27%); and "Judges don't take into account whether or not child support is made when granting visitation rights" (24%).

Cluster 3 ("problems with lawyers") received the lowest rate of endorsement overall by respondents as being applicable to their situation. Three responses were endorsed by one-quarter of respondents as being applicable. These were: "I believe my lawyer recognized I was under duress, but wasn't prepared to do anything about it" (24%), "My lawyer doesn't care; doesn't listen to me" (22%), "His lawyer said I used cruelty in court and attempted to reverse things that made me look like the abuser" (22%). The remaining items in this cluster (12) were only endorsed as applicable by 1% to 16% of respondents.

Coping by Clusters.

Many items in all clusters were endorsed by respondents as applicable to how they coped with their experience with the justice system. The statement that received the highest rate of endorsement was "The cruelty, the mind games leave one with no self-esteem". Ninety-five percent of respondents indicated this was applicable to their situation. This item was in the cluster named "struggling to stay sane". Five other items were rated as applicable by 90% of respondents. These were: "I feel very stressed"; "I cry a lot"; "I get very depressed"; "Coping is hard, I don't cope"; and "I feel constantly frustrated". The lowest rate of endorsement in this cluster was for the item "I ate a lot". It was still endorsed by 49% of respondents as applicable. The remainder of the items received agreement as applicable from 69% ("I get sick frequently") to 82% (" I feel I'm going insane"). Respondents also indicated they can't sleep (80%).

In cluster 6, "seeking information/mending" one item received 93% agreement. That was: "I still have hope for the future". "I relied on my own abilities, I planned a life without him" also had a very high rate of endorsement at 87%. The remainder of the items in this cluster ranged from 24% agreement ("I bought a dog for protection") to 78% agreement ("I used prayers to cope"). The women indicated that they coped by reading books about abused women to get a better understanding (58%), getting involved in advocating for abused women (65%) talking to their doctors (64%), saving information from courts, lawyers, etcetra, (60%), finding our information for themselves (47%) and by journalling (49%).

Cluster 5 ("coping through other resources and professionals"), also contained items that received high rates of endorsement by respondents. Over 90% of women responded that they coped by going to groups and finding that talking to others in the same situation helped; healing occurred through sharing. Almost 90% responded that financial support is very important for their coping and counselling was helpful. The remainder of the items in this cluster received a rate of endorsement from 7% ("I went to the Law Society to report my lawyer"), to 85% ("My kids, school, job kept me going"). The women indicated that they made safety plans with the help of others (78%). Over half responded that "It would have helped me if he had spent some time in jail" (60%), and it helped them cope when the police removed him from the house (55%). Further, nearly half indicated that the spousal violence follow-up teams were helpful (47%), that they went to a shelter or second stage housing (40%), and that they coped by keeping in touch with the police (40%); they also coped better when the police informed them of his whereabouts (40%).

Cluster 2 ("seeking protection/stress effects") held one item that was endorsed by over 87% of respondents. That was: "I am over-cautious now". Almost 82% indicated they got angry at the system, while over 82% indicated they coped by "becoming numb, not feeling". About half of the women needed sleeping pills and prescription drugs for depression and anxiety to cope, or needed to quit school/job to cope; they couldn't cope with additional stress. Almost half needed to borrow money from parents to feed the kids, and about 40% stated they relied on a domestic violence emergency response system for protection. Almost 53% responded they "coped by giving it back to him--mainly verbal abuse". Some moved in with their parents for protection (27%).

Cluster 4, ("helplessness/giving up") contained one item that received about 80% agreement: "I coped by closing everything up inside of me". Approximately three-quarters of respondents indicated they hide, are embarrassed (75%), live in constant fear

(76%) or had friends or family that did a lot of judging and made them feel responsible (62%). Approximately half of the respondents noted that they "thought of suicide as a way out" (58%), or thought of killing him to end the abuse (58%). A further 55% noted that they "coped by going back to him and tried not to upset him". Only 20% however, responded that they "dropped all court charges".

Cluster 1, ("escape/reference to children's coping") received the overall lowest rate of endorsement. Seventy-one percent (71%) indicated they "wanted to leave the city to escape the abuse". About half noted they "never bank on winning for an outcome" (67%). Almost 40% responded that their kids withdrew/got violent or became suicidal, or that it hurt to have to tell the kids their dad got off charges because they saw the attack. Finally 40% responded that they "would have coped better if police had laid charges".

Qualitative Responses Collected From Surveys.

Respondents to the survey were invited to add any comments they wanted on the survey. A total of 21 respondents wrote lengthy comments. The comments were requested to assist this author in determining if redundancy had been reached during concept mapping. Most respondents provided comments to expand on and explain their answers. Some respondents provided the author with more details about their relationship with their abuser to aid in understanding why they responded as they did in the survey. For example, in one survey, the woman provided asterisks beside certain answers and wrote "please see notes on back". Very few new issues were identified by the comments. One woman noted that "many lawyers pressure the women into selling their homes and dividing the assets". One woman noted that when she called 911 "the dispatcher talked to him and told him to stay put. Why? So he could kill me?" Another wrote that she had to sue her husband for half of the assets and "I had to serve him myself with court papers; my knees turned to jello". She also noted that for three years police have placated her with responses such as "Be thankful you don't have kids" or "Be thankful it's now over". She wrote; "It is difficult to be thankful when a bastard has wasted 3 years of your life and he is left smiling while you cry yourself to sleep everynight!".

Two women wrote that they had made the decision to try to "avoid the court system and all legal battles". Both noted that financial support was a big issue for them. One wrote, "In my mind it was better to forego the partnership (financially speaking) than to have to face what I perceive as a horrid legal system. I wasted enough of my time on his life over 29 years of marriage".

Many comments regarding the issues supported the highest endorsed cluster, "continued financial abuse". One woman wrote, "My divorce has cost me $8000.00 and is still not over. He files silly affidavits and when they are heard they are adjourned the morning of the hearing". Another wrote, "How do I raise 3 kids without support or money?" Another noted, "To this day my husband refuses to pay child support. I can't do anything about it because I'm on social assistance. To me the legal system has failed me more often than it should have". One respondent wrote: "As soon as the lawyers found out that I had bonds/RRSPs they said cash them. Fees ranged from $1,000.00 to $3,000.00 minimum for the basics. What a joke! Money talks is all I can say". Finally, one woman provided two written pages of comments. In regards to this cluster she wrote, " Why do I have to pay to get back into my home? Why does a restraining order cost so much?".

Many comments received also supported the cluster that had the second highest rate of endorsement, "the courts encourage continued abuse". One woman wrote, "I was briefed before and after court and the experience was still threatening". Another wrote:

> "Women need concise, clear information. There should be an automatic process in place. We need a booklet, pamphlet on 'Alberta Law for Women' and divorce proceedings. This would help women allowing them to be prepared, informed and in the decision making process rather than relying on their lawyers for

> guidance and making decisions for them without any regard of the consequences."

Finally, one woman noted "The court judges play along with my husband when he plays victim".

Three other clusters received supporting comments. These were "minimizing the seriousness of wife assault by courts" (cluster 1), "child issues/custody and call for assistance" (cluster 7) and "failure to serve and protect" (cluster 8). Comments supporting cluster 1 included: (1) "I tolerated harassment from ex-husband because of an access order", (2) "He did not go to jail, got 2 years probation...Big deal, he sees a counsellor for two hours a month", (3) "Abusers should be made to go to jail and made to attend and learn better behaviors", and (4) "In court every need, desire, or issue is looked after for the male first".

Comments supporting cluster 7 include the following: (1) "My ex-husband emotionally abuses my son by putting him in the middle of things and confiding in him about his personal life rather than talking to another adult. I am very frustrated about this because there is nothing I can do", (2) "I feel the system has nothing in place to protect my children from abuse during visitations", and (3) "I feel no one, no systems are willing to step in when abuse happens to my children because they call it 'custody issues'".

Comments supporting cluster 8 were frequent. Two women wrote that police did not lay charges until they showed them their bruises, and still they did not lay charges. Another wrote:

> "In the past I have found support from the police to be highly lacking. For example, after a separation of 18 months (he vacated) when he smashed the door in and I phoned the police, they wouldn't charge him, first because he had not yet physically hit me and second, he told them I was lying and he lived there. They merely put him in a cab and asked him not to return that evening."

Another woman wrote; "My husband left a mark on my wrist from his watch from pressure - they didn't charge him". Another noted that "When I called the police it took 1 1/2 hours to how up. I got a bad response from police". Another noted that the police "treated me like a child and gave me confusing, mixed and wrong information. She also wrote that the "police made sexist comments to me (asked it I was suffering from PMS)." Finally, one respondent wrote: "Policemen need more training.... They are sometimes more of a problem than the men because the men get approval or verification that it's okay. Women are then more victimized."

In regards to coping strategies, fewer comments were received. No new coping strategies were identified. Comments supported the clusters discovered in the concept mapping phase. One woman said she coped by hiding and that the cruelty and mind games left her feeling hopeless. Another noted she felt "trapped and insecure" and was in counselling to become stronger. In regards to self-esteem a respondent wrote; "I have so little self-esteem, that I didn't take my son with me". Another noted that she "gave up everything for him, my friends, my career, my looks and my entire sense of self...I attempted suicide". She further wrote that after he started tormenting her she wasn't sure how much more she could take but that she was now "trying to get my old life back, and maybe a new one. I attend group sessions once a week, which really help. It is nice to know I no longer live in a vacuum and that people care.".

One woman stated that the effects on the children are ongoing. She wrote: "It has been 2 years since we were separated - but the effects on the children are a forever problem. They continue to see counsellors and I hope one day they can cope". One woman commented that talking to friends and family was not a good idea because they "enable". Another wrote in this regard that she "coped by going back to him because of family pressure...they got sucked in by his sweet talk".

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The present study was conducted due to a need to examine abused women's experiences with the justice system and how they cope with these experiences. It was found that there is a lack of research literature on this subject. The concept mapping method was used to identify these experiences and coping strategies, and to determine is specific themes exist. The variability and extent of the issues and coping strategies experiences by a sample of abused women was then examined. Ninety-eight issues or experiences and fifty-nine coping strategies were identified through interviews, focus groups and written responses. These statements were then sorted by women who attend support groups for battered women in north Edmonton and a rural area, and analyzed using multidimensional scaling and cluster analytic techniques. This process resulted in the development of a concept map for the issues that contained ten themes and a concept map for the coping strategies that contained six themes. In this chapter, the results of the study are reviewed and discussed, implications are presented and recommendations for future research are made.

Concept Mapping

Responses were collected to address the research questions of "What are the issues or experiences abused women have with the justice system?" and "How do they cope?". A total of 105 issues or experiences were examined for redundancy and reduced to 98 in order to be analyzed by the Concept System (Trochim, 1993). The 98 issues or experiences and the 59 coping statements were sorted by women who attend groups for battered women. They labelled each sort with their concept of the theme within each set of statements. The names for the final clusters identified were chosen from the labels provided. These names were then taken back to a group of abused women who had been involved in the sorting procedure for validation.

Issues or Experiences.

The ten clusters identified through the concept mapping process were consistent with results from other research and literature on abused women's experience with the justice system. In the 1995 Alberta Law Reform Institute Discussion Paper it was noted that abused women experienced problems with custody and access. In the present research this emerged as a theme. The sample in the Alberta Law Reform Institute study also noted that problems existed with legal aid and high costs. These issues were very evident in the cluster named "continued financial abuse". A lack of information about the court process was also described by the sample in the Alberta Law Reform study. This also emerged as a theme in the current research. Women in this research called this "lack of support, information and other resources".

Intimidation of the women by the husband and judicial officials and a lack of recognition of emotional abuse were described in the Alberta Law Reform Discussion Paper (1995). These issues were quite evident within the theme named "the courts encourage continued abuse". In this theme, the women also noted the need for a psychiatric evaluation and mandatory counselling of their husbands. These were listed specifically within the Discussion Paper.

Ongoing harassment, lack of penalties and inadequate restraining orders found by the Alberta Law Reform Institute (1995) were contained within the theme "minimizing the seriousness of wife assault by courts". The theme named "failure to serve and protect" was also supported by this previous research. Themes not listed in the Discussion Paper that emerged in this study included "maintenance enforcement/child support" and "victims through the legal system". The need for child support was listed by Mahon (1988) as an issue abused women experience when leaving an abusive relationship. Default in support payments was presented by the women in this study as a major issue. Mahon writes: "One can begin to understand the full meaning of 'economic violence' "(p. 72) after listening to the women's stories. In this research other themes that emerged supported themes that were consistent with this research. Mahon described the following issues/ themes that were consistent with this research:

(1) problems with police and police attitude; (2) problems with lawyers; (3) frustrations with courts (family and provincial); (4) a lack of understanding of the effects of emotional abuse; (5) problems with custody and access (and continued harassment); (6) a lack of information and support; and (7) a lack of adequate deterrents and penalties for the abuser.

Coping

Six clusters or themes emerged from this research indicating how abused women coped with their experiences with the justice system. Although the emotional effects resulting from being in an abusive relationship likely influenced the responses given by participants in the concept mapping phase, the women were specifically asked how they coped with their experience with the justice system. The themes that emerged indicate how difficult these experiences were for the participants. The themes also indicate that both positive and negative coping occurred. "Struggling to stay sane" and "helplessness/giving up" are two themes that are consistent with other research that documents the psychological effects of being in a battering relationship. Battered woman syndrome as identified by Walker (1984) could be used to explain statements within the cluster of "helplessness/giving up" such as, "I thought of suicide as a way out"; "I thought of killing him to end the abuse"; "I coped by going back to him and I tried not to upset him"; and "I dropped all court charges, it was easier to live with him and know what he was up to". These statements, however, along with statements in the cluster "struggling to stay sane", may simply reflect the reality of a legal system that is perceived as inadequate by abused women.

The concept of "learned helplessness" identified by Walker (1979) was not supported by two themes that emerged as coping strategies in this research. "Coping through other resources and professionals" and "seeking information/mending" were two themes that indicated despite the severe levels of stress and psychological effects presented by the women, they still sought to gain control over their own lives. Statements such as "I made safety plans with the help of others"; "I went to group....Healing occurred through sharing"; "I coped by finding out information for myself"; "I relied on my own abilities; I planned a life without him"; and "I still have hope for the future" indicate that despite barriers and problems that emerged as themes with the justice system, these women do not always respond with symptoms of "learned helplessness". They may feel helpless in such a system, but they actively seek to have their needs met.

One theme that emerged included references to children's coping. The emotional effects of a battering relationship on the children are well documented and include withdrawal, aggressiveness, depression, poor interactional patterns, school difficulties and low self-esteem (Lyons, 1990; Pressman, 1984). The women in this present study noted that their children were also affected by their parents' experience with the justice system. Withdrawal, violence, suicidal ideation and physical illness were mentioned as effects on the children. This isn't surprising considering the number of issues the women presented in their experiences with the justice system, as well as the high emotional needs of the mothers as they struggle to stay sane, feel helpless or give up, or display the effects of stress. One woman in her comments on the survey wrote that "I was concerned...with the emotional and psychological resources I had to offer the kids. An angry, exhausted from legal battles mother would have been no good to them at all".

Finally, the women coped by seeking protection. Physical as well as emotional protection was sought by the women in this study. They coped by hiding, moving in with parents or through alarms. Emotionally, they became numb, not feeling or avoid additional stress. They also became over-cautious.

The Prevalence Study

To address the research question of the prevalence of issues or experiences and ways of coping, a survey instrument was developed directly from responses provided during the concept mapping phase. The results provide support for the concept mapping phase of this research.

Issues or Experiences

Only two statements collected during the concept mapping phase were endorsed as not applicable by all respondents. These were: "The judge granted him my car when he takes the children for visitations." and "I have to travel to another province to go back to court and stay in hotels. Many court delays have cost me lots of money.". Respondents indicated that many of the issues/experiences were applicable to their own situation. At least 25 percent of the respondents had indicated that about half of the issues/experiences were applicable. The only cluster which had a lower rate of endorsement was that named "problems with lawyers". Although all statements were endorsed by at least one respondent this cluster contained items that were not as applicable to the respondents' situations.

One theme, "maintenance enforcement/child support", has not received frequent mention in previous research on abused women's experience with the justice system. This is perhaps because maintenance enforcement has not been seen as a direct part of the justice system by those involved in such research. Concerns with the abusive partner being able to "manipulate" the system to hide his income, or abdicate his financial responsibility were endorsed frequently as an issue by respondents to the survey. Issues of finances and the justice system with abused women are briefly discussed in other research (Alberta Law Reform Institute, 1995; Mahon, 1988; Jaffer *et al.*, 1992); however, the results of this research indicate that "continued financial abuse" including lack of child support and high costs of legal services are a great concern for the participants.

Coping

The results from the second part of the survey indicate how difficult it is for the women to cope with their experiences with the justice system. Although the emotional effects resulting from the abusive relationship cannot be separated from how the women responded to how they cope with their experiences with the justice system, it is evident that coping with the justice system adds considerable stress. Psychological effects resulting from these experiences include low self-esteem, depression, symptoms of stress, fear, frustration, embarrassment, hypervigilance and anxiety. The high degree of agreement with items in the cluster "struggling to stay sane" indicates the name is not a misnomer.

The women also indicated at a very high rate of agreement that they coped by becoming over-cautious, angry and seeking medication for depression, anxiety and a lack of sleep. They sought protection but over three-quarters stated they lived in constant fear. Suicide was considered by over half as an option. Over half considered killing their abuser and over half at one time or another indicated they coped by returning to the abuser.

Even with the discouragement and frustration expressed by the respondents, many endorsed coping strategies that indicated they were attempting to gain control over their lives. Less than one-quarter of respondents noted they had dropped court charges. Over 90 percent went to a group for battered women and over 80 percent sought counselling or talked to others. They noted they relied on their own abilities and planned a life without him. They were proactive in their actions, seeking information, reading and advocating for other abused women. Over 90 percent indicated they still had hope for the future. The high rate of endorsement of these coping strategies does not lend support to the concept of "learned helplessness". Instead, it indicates that the respondents became actively involved in getting their needs met. Rather than presenting symptoms of learned helplessness, the respondents presented symptoms of stress, depression, lack of self-esteem, frustration and anger that resulted from the barriers they encountered. These contributed to feeling helpless, but not hopeless.

Implications of This Research

Boyd (1985) from the London Battered Women's Advocacy Clinic Inc. wrote:

> Although a large number of clients attending the Clinic indicated at intake that legal concerns brought them to the clinic (48.9%), the majority cited emotional support as their motivation (52.6%). At follow-up, only 26% found legal advocacy the most helpful clinic service, while 70.1% cited emotional support

> counselling as helping the most. This is not to suggest that legal advocacy was unimportant. Most questions were fairly routine, once the staff had researched and understood the issues. The emotional support counselling aspect became paramount. Unless legal worries were dealt with first, however, many clients could not take full advantage of the counselling process. (p. 30)

This research supports Boyd's notion that there is an intrinsic relationship between emotional support counselling and legal advocacy when working with abused women. The obstacles and barriers experienced by abused women who use the justice system to extricate themselves from the relationship have been suggested as insurmountable to some women (Boyd, 1985; Macleod, 1989) and as a result the women may return to the relationship. In this research over half of the respondents to the survey indicated they coped with their experiences with the justice system by "going back to him". While the emotional effects of coping with the justice system were endorsed as highly devastating by the respondents, they also indicated they coped through counselling, attending group therapy and seeking information.

There exist other programs, primarily in the United States that integrate emotional and legal support. Examples are: The Domestic Abuse Project (DAP) in Minneapolis, the House of Ruth in Baltimore City, the Domestic Violence Project in Cleveland, Ohio, Project Safeguard in Maui, Hawaii, the Second Circuit Family Court in Hartford Conneticut, Family Violence Intervention Units in Hilo, Hawaii, Alternatives to Family Violence, East Hawaii, the Committee to Aid Abused Women in Reno, Nevada, and the Protection Order Advocacy Program in Seattle, Washington (McHardy, 1992). McHardy (1992) writes: "The integration of a panoply of legal services with counselling and shelter is a basic component of a full service, holistic approach to the needs of battered women. Counselling and legal activities tend to be mutually supportive" (p. 16).

In Edmonton the only integrated service intended to assist victims of family violence with legal and emotional needs is the Spousal Violence Follow-up Teams which is a partnership between the City of Edmonton Police and the City of Edmonton Community and Family Services. A detective and a social worker work as a team to assist victims of family violence. In this research the participants in the concept mapping phase identified that the consistency of the teams helped them cope. In the survey almost half of the respondents indicated this applied to their situation as well (a substantial amount considering that approximately 40 percent of respondents were from areas other than Edmonton).

Another implication of this research stems from the recognition of how difficult it is for abused women to cope with the justice system. Boyd (1985) noted that battered women need clear information and emotional support to assist them in their roles as chief witnesses. This strengthens the chance of successful results which in turn "helps the woman to be strong... and so the process of change begins" (p. 31). Counselling and group therapy for abused women should focus on reducing anxiety and depression. The establishment of safety plans and protective measures seems to be an essential ingredient in therapy. Counselling should also focus on building self-esteem. Abused women need to begin to see they are worthwhile and that the violence was not their fault. This support is especially required when the women face obstacles in the justice system such as the issue identified in this respondent's statement: "His lawyer said I used cruelty in court and attempted to reverse things that made me look like the abuser".

The women also need to be encouraged to participate in self-help groups as over ninety percent of respondents indicated this was helpful. Finally, until such time that a truly integrated service exists within our community, any psychologist who works with abused women must utilize appropriate referrals to the legal community.

Conclusion

In this study abused women have indicated that they continue to face obstacles and barriers in the justice system. They state that it is very difficult for them to cope with these experiences. Categorization of the issues or experiences in the form of a concept map revealed that the concepts and representative statements were consistent with previous research. Categorization of the coping responses in the concept map revealed that despite feeling helpless, stressed and frustrated, that abused women use proactive coping strategies. This does not support the concept of learned helplessness.

The survey data highlighted the frequency with which other abused women also experience the issues and experiences with the justice system and coping strategies. The extremely high degree of agreement with the coping responses emphasizes how important it is for abused women to receive emotional support and counselling throughout their legal battles. At the same time legal advice and information is necessary. Psychologists who work with abused women need to understand the nature of the issues these women face when attempting to extricate themselves from the relationship. Although legal consultation is not within the scope of psychology, an informed psychologist can help an abused woman to assess her situation and develop a plan of action. Development of safety plans, the provision of basic information and emotional support throughout the legal process will encourage the abused woman to assume control of her destiny. Assisting the woman to develop self-esteem, independence and connection with other abused women are important counselling techniques.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this study are preliminary and include some important limitations. First, an attempt to include women from various ethnic groups, as well as urban and rural regions was made during the concept mapping phase. The sample, however was not representative of all abused women. Although every attempt was made to include a more representative sample of abused women in the survey, the low return rate precludes generalization of results. Very few surveys were returned from smaller communities in Alberta or from aboriginal settlements. A limitation exists with the fact that surveys were completed by volunteers. It is quite likely that the surveys were returned by women who faced more obstacles or issues with the justice system and were more negatively affected by these experiences.

Finally, a cautionary statement needs to be made about the research technique of concept mapping. Concept mapping provided preliminary data in this exploratory study but did not provide the whole picture reflecting on abused women's experiences and coping with the justice system. Additional research is still needed to provide a more wholistic picture.

Future Research

In reference to the concept mapping method further investigations could focus on examining issues faced by specific groups of abused women with the justice system and how they cope with such experiences. Women with disabilities, women whose primary language is not English, immigrant women and native women have not been traditionally represented in research about family violence. In addition, the concept mapping methodology could be utilized with children or players and officials in the justice system to examine their perceptions of the problems abused women face with the justice system.

The concept maps developed in this research could be utilized with various groups to increase awareness of the issues abused women face with the justice system and awareness of how difficult it is for them to cope. Pre and post measurements of attitudes could be developed to determine if an increased awareness results from such a strategy. Specific groups like police or lawyers could be targeted. Psychologists could also be presented with the maps. It would be interesting to see if the statements collected through the concept mapping phase would be sorted differently by different groups. Would police or lawyers sort these differently than abused women? Would the themes be named differently?

To collect data, larger numbers could be targeted as well as specific groups to determine the variability of responses. From this research it is not evident if rural or urban women experience more issues or more difficulty coping. Native groups could be surveyed to determine if their experience differs. Women who have received assistance through the Spousal Violence Follow-up Teams could be surveyed and compared to those who have not received such assistance to determine if their experiences differ.

Finally, future research could focus on the resilience of abused women. Rather than focusing on learned helplessness, researchers could examine how the more positive coping strategies identified in this study develop.

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APPENDIX: A

Issues or Experiences and Coping Statements

Issues or Experiences With the Justice System

1. Charges against my husband were dropped because I could not attend court set on the date due to circumstances beyond my control.

2. I was told that continued harassment by my husband was a family matter because he has access to the children.

3. My lawyer informed me that his first responsibility was to the judge and then to the client.

4. His lawyer manages to delay court hearings causing me to return to court frequently and increasing my lawyer fees.

5. There is too long of a delay in getting a peace bond.

6. The lawyers made an agreement out of court and therefore no conviction occurred (they plea bargained).

7. Important witnesses were not on the subpena list and therefore were not called.

8. He is not paying child support as ordered by the courts.

9. I cannot afford to go to court to seek child support.

10. He hides his income (claimed bankruptcy/does not file correct income tax) and therefore does not pay adequate child support.

11. Judges don't take into account whether or not child support is made when granting visitation rights.

12. My lawyer doesn't care; doesn't listen to me.

13.I did not speak enough English to call the police or ask for help.

14. I had no idea about legal proceedings, legal aid.

15. A big obstacle to get charges laid is a lack of evidence, especially with emotional abuse.

16.He tried to get me charged with kidnapping when I took the kids to a shelter.

17. My victim impact statement was not read by the judge prior to sentencing, and therefore the sentence was too light.

18. Information is not coordinated between all professionals involved therefore information gets missed (ie: doctor's report not filed and could not be used as evidence).

19. I felt threatened, confused and intimidated by the court process.

20. The lawyer was able to work with me as an equal; a good relationship occurred.

21. The police did not take action on threats made by my husband.

22. My lawyer referred me to a group for abused women.

23. I was not aware of when he was being served with the divorce/legal papers. I was unable to make safety plans. He came to my house after being served and he was very angry.

24. The police knew my husband and therefore he wasn't charged.

25. The police tried to "buddy" with my husband and took him for coffee. They did not lay charges.

26. When I called the police did not show up.

27. I was afraid to call the police because I know them and am embarrassed.

28. Information between police is not passed onto the next shift or to other officers.

29. My husband abuses the children during visitations but because the child is too young to serve as a credible witness, no action can be taken.

30. My husband was escorted back to the house by the police and he took his belongings plus other things needed by me and my children and he attacked me while the police were present.

31. The police did not lay charges until I showed them the bruises.

32. The police attended my call but my husband kept interfering while the police were there and I was too scared to pursue charges because he threatened me.

33. The judge didn't believe my story.

34. I didn't go to a doctor because no one told me to and therefore charges were dropped because of a lack of evidence.

35. In court we had an interpreter who interpreted for both sides and took his side. Each person should have their own interpreter.

36. The waiting period to go to court on abuse charges was too long and allowed for threats, harassment and further abuse to occur while I waited.

37. My own lawyer did not show up for court, another one did who was unfamiliar with my case.

38. I felt discrimination occurred by police and court officials.

39. Generally there's an attitude that is recognized by lawyers that the courts have a bias towards women that sees them as unintelligent, hysterical and exaggerating individuals, therefore they are further victimized.

40. The clerk of the court who records information and judgements from the judge is sometimes careless, not enough attention is placed on some issues that could make a significant difference on the court orders (ie: they may miss a point that places the victim in danger).

41. The women are left with high legal bills due to the man's abuse.

42. My husband was a lawyer and therefore other lawyers and police were afraid to represent me.

43. My husband kidnapped the children. The police did not lay charges.

44. My husband and his friends locked me out of the house, If I left in front of witnesses that means I abandoned the house and children, and would lose the children, the house, everything.

45. The police have a gender bias to believe the man, especially is he is a professional.

46. His lawyer said I used cruelty in court and attempted to reverse things that made me look like the abuser.

47. I was told I was abusing the law due to frequent phone calls to the police.

48. My ex-husband threatened the police/lawyers with court action which scared them.

49. He had delayed maintenance support payments through delays in court hearings.

50. His mental health was not taken into account by the judge because no assessment was done. He was mentally ill.

51. I was not asked by the judge to validate his story, was not allowed in the courtroom during his testimony. He lied on his affidavit. He perjured himself in court.

52. Not enough information was given to me, no one explained court procedures to me. I felt people were making decisions on my behalf without consulting me.

53. I needed to write up my own affidavits to save money and make sure important information was not left out.

54. My husband saw a psychologist who stated he was too depressed to work and therefore doesn't pay child support.

55. The judge granted him my car when he takes the children for visitations.

56. We trade the children at a police station because I have a restraining order and the police are rude and obnoxious and have told me they are not a babysitting service.

57. A home assessment was ordered by a judge but the waiting period for these is too long and it can be delayed if both parties (and lawyers) don't agree on the same assessor.

58. My ex-husband used the Law Society as a method of abuse against me. Because my lawyer did a good job for me, he complained to the Law Society about my lawyer and they disciplined her. When I tried to intervene they told me I was irrelevant to the case.

59. I got the impression that the lawyer felt my case was trivial because no children were involved and little money was involved.

60. He was charged, arrested and convicted. His sentence was probations with no contact with me. He frequently breaches this and ends up back in court but there are no consequences.

61. Restraining orders are too costly because you need a lawyer and even if you get one the consequences of breaching it are negligible.

62. If the abuser gets time the sentence is too lenient and not accurate (ie: if he gets 6 months he only serves 2/3 time due to remission).

63. I was not informed of his release date and could not make safety plans. The only time I could relax was when he was in jail, but I wasn't told when or if he got a temporary release from jail so I wasn't safe.

64. No follow-up has occurred following the court decisions. It should be mandatory for the man to get help and someone should ensure he follows through with court decisions.

65. I got a good response from police.

66. The courts still minimize the seriousness of family violence. My husband did not go to jail, he only got $150.00 fine for beating me.

67.The crown prosecutor did not show up prior to meet with me; no one informed me what was happening.

68. I was so afraid I would do something wrong in court that would enable him to get off. The crown prosecutor could have briefed me about what to expect thereby alleviating that fear.

69. When we finally settled, the judge said he was being "generous" with child support and therefore he didn't have to backpay the support he owed for a year while waiting court settlement.

70. He has supervised visits with the children until after he has received counselling. He only went three times and now wants the supervision removed.

71. My ex-husband abused my lawyer. My lawyer didn't believe me until this occurred.

72. Legal aid only provides so much money which is not enough for abused women's needs.

73. I couldn't get a restraining order because he didn't hurt me bad enough.

74. He claimed bankruptcy and left me with the debts. Because I was married to him, I had to assume his debts.

75. I had no place to go to get away from him because I live in the country and there's no shelter nearby.

76. I had to go to court in a small town and everyone now knows about my marriage. I had to move to get away.

77. When I reported my husband was driving without a licence when he had the children, the police asked who I was, and then told me they don't get involved in family matters.

78. My husband pleaded guilty right away and got 2 years for this.

79. My husband who beat me was a lawyer. The lawyer representing me took frequent phone calls and instruction from him.

80. My lawyer verbally abused me; he yelled and swore at me and told me not to make my husband angry.

81. My lawyer signed an affidavit that was not true.

82. I believe my lawyer recognized I was under duress, but he wasn't prepared to do anything about it.

83. I had no income, no one suggested legal aid, the lawyers were aware I couldn't fight very long in court.

84. Even thong various lawyers did not act for me, they charged me for reading the file and would not return it until I payed. I had to give the a retainer of usually $1,000.00 that was not all returned.

85. My husband payed child support to his lawyer who passed it onto my lawyer who had to give it to legal aid because I owed money.

86. My lawyer told me to learn to live with the threats from my husband.

87. I have to travel to another province to go back to court and stay in hotels. Many court delays have cost me lots of money.

88. I fired my lawyer and he wouldn't give over my file to the new lawyer so we had to start all over again.

89. The day my husband went to court I had to sneak back into the house to get clothes for the kids.

90. The bruises from the beating were gone by the time we went to court and therefore there was no evidence. He got off with no conviction.

91. Women who need legal aid have to line up at 6 or 7 am and hope to get their case heard that day. This is hard when it's cold and you have to take your kids along (often on the bus). There's no where to leave them.

92. I had to threaten to take my lawyer to the Law Society before he would return my phone calls or get back to me.

93. If you go to mediation with the man it's torture because you can't say anything. The woman is intimidated and controlled while he is present.

94. I didn't have enough notice to go to court.

95. The police could not help me when he was harassing me because I didn't have a restraining order; I couldn't afford one.

96. In order to get maintenance enforcement set up I had to provide them with information like his social insurance number. He hid this information from me.

97. My ex-husband phone maintenance enforcement telling them we had got back together. They were going to close the file. I needed to prove to them we were still separated.

98. When I reported to child welfare that my children's health was being affected when they went to visit their father, they said they could not act because it was a custody suit, but they responded to his reports that I was abusing them because he threatened to sue them.

Coping with the Justice System

1. I want to leave the city to escape the abuse.
2. I cry a lot.
3. Coping is hard, I don't cope.
4. I borrow money from parents to feed the kids.
5. I feel constantly frustrated.
6. I hide, I'm embarrassed, I don't want people to know I'm abused.
7. I can't sleep.
8. I needed to quit school/job to cope, I could not cope with the additional stress.
9. My children get physically ill.
10. I live in constant fear.
11. I went to a shelter and then to a second stage housing. This helped a lot.
12. I talked to friends.
13. I went to a group; found talking to others in the same situation helpful, healing occurred through sharing.
14. I moved in with my parents for protection.
15. I get angry at the system.
16. I feel very stressed.
17. I made safety plans with the help of others.
18. I coped by closing everything up inside of me.
19. I coped by giving it back to him--mainly verbal abuse.
20. I thought of suicide as a way out.
21. I needed to take sleeping pills.
22. I coped through counselling.
23. I used prayers to cope.
24. Financial support is very important . The women need a trust fund for financial assistance to bridge them over.
25. The cruelty, mind games, leave one with no self-esteem.
26. I get very depressed.

27. My kids, school, job keep me going.

28. The consistency offered by the spousal violence follow-up teams was helpful.

29. I have a domestic violence emergency response system that I rely on for protection.

30. I still have hope for the future.

31. I needed prescription drugs for depression and anxiety.

32. I coped by becoming numb, not feeling.

33. We all sleep in one room with the drapes drawn, and doors latched.

34. I hide at the lake when I can afford it.

35. I coped by keeping in touch with the police; the police became familiar with my case.

36. I coped better when the police informed me of his whereabouts.

37. I went to the Law Society to report my lawyer.

38. I bought a dog for protection.

40. I ate a lot.

41. I thought of killing him to end the abuse.

42. My kids withdrew and my oldest got violent with her sisters. She even wrote a suicide letter.

43. I coped by going back to him and tried not to upset him.

44. I coped by finding out information for myself. I searched the libraries to see if I had a case.

45. I never bank on winning for an outcome.

46. I relied on my own abilities; I planned a life without him.

47. I am over-cautious now.

48. I started to save all information from courts, lawyers, etc, and I photocopied everything.

49. I got involved in advocating for abused women.

50. I cope by writing in a journal, it helps me reflect.

51. I get sick frequently.

52. I read books about abused women to get a better understanding.

53. It hurt to have to tell my kids that their dad got off charges because they were there, they saw the attack.

54. I dropped all court charges, it was easier to live with him again and know what he was up to.

55. I would have coped better if the police had laid charges.

56. It helped me to cope when the police removed him from the house.

57. It would have helped me cope is he had spent some time in jail.
58. My doctor helped me; I talked to him.
59. My friends and family did a lot of judging and made me feel responsible.

APPENDIX B

Letter of Introduction and Consent to Participate

Introduction and Consent for the Study: Abused Women's Experience with the Justice System

(The following will be read to all participants or provided in writing)

Dear Participant:

A study is being carried out at the University of Alberta to develop a better understanding of abused women's experience with the justice system. It is hoped that the results of this study will help those supporting and counselling abused women through the process of coping with the justice system to do so in a more informed and effective manner. As well, the primary researcher has been involved with a group of abused women in a north-side drop-in group, and it is hoped that the results of this study can be shared with officials involved with the justice system.

Your decision to become involved in this research is completely voluntary. You may discontinue participation at any time with no consequence to you. Your answers will be completely confidential and anonymous. Please DO NOT sign your name or provide any identifying information. If you are willing to help with this project, please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Your willingness to answer the questions indicates your consent to be involved in this study.

1. Please describe an experience or issue you have had with the justice system (police, lawyers, court officials, social workers, others) in regards to your abusive situation.

2. How did you cope with you experience with the justice system?

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study. The answers to the questions will form the basis for a survey that will be sent out to abused women throughout Alberta. The results of this study will be shared with you. Once the survey is developed, you will receive a copy of it to answer if you chose to continue to be involved in Phase II of this study. If you have any questions, please contact Sue Ludwig at 440-3414. If you find by answering these questions that you feel a need to talk further or a need for counselling, please do not hesitate to contact me and every effort will be made to refer you to an appropriate source.

Please indicate that you have read this and understand the above.

____

Yours Sincerely,
Sue Ludwig
PhD Candidate, University of Alberta

APPENDIX C

SORTING INSTRUCTIONS

Sorting Instructions

Enclosed is a list of 98 statements abused women have made about their experiences with the justice system and 59 statements about how they cope with these experiences.

I am asking for your help to sort these statements into groups which contain common themes. You can sort the statements into as many groups as you wish. Statements can be kept separate if you think that they don't fit into any group. Please do not place all the items into one pile or leave all the items to form 98 or 59 separate groups. Once you have sorted the statements into groups please place them into separate envelopes and write on the outside of the envelope a description of what you believe the essential theme to be. Please sort the 98 statements separate from the 59 statements. Use the large envelopes for the 98 statements and the small envelopes for the 59 statements.

Example

Statements:	Theme:
1. My lawyer doesn't care; doesn't listen to me.	Negative attitude of lawyers
2. My own lawyer did not show up for court, another one did who was unfamiliar with my case.	
3. I had to threaten to take my lawyer to the Law Society before he would get back to me.	
4. My lawyer verbally abused me; he yelled and swore at me and told me not to make my husband angry.	

To sort the statements

A. Group the statements that you think go together.
B. Put the groups into the appropriate envelopes.
C. Write on the outside of each envelope the theme of the statements inside.
D. Place all the envelopes back into the large envelope.
E. Return the envelope back to me or I will pick it up.

Thanks!

Sue Ludwig

APPENDIX D

The Survey

Dear Participant:

I am a doctoral student at the University of Alberta and have also been a member of a group for battered women for the past 3 years. I am conducting a study about abused women's experiences with the justice system and how they coped with these experiences. I have interviewed abused women and collected responses they gave me about the types of experiences or issues they had with the justice system and responses about how they coped with these experiences. The following questionnaire contains these responses. I am now sending this survey out to abused women in Alberta to determine if other abused women have similar experiences.

The results of this survey will be written up as a thesis. The results should be helpful to those involved in counselling and supporting abused women through their experiences with the justice system and as well it is hoped that results can be shared with officials in the justice system. If you are willing to help with this project, please take a few minutes and answer the following questions and then complete the survey on the following pages. Your answers will be kept strictly confidential; no identifying data will be published. Your participation is completely **voluntary**.
Please seal your completed survey in the envelope provided and return it to the person who gave it to you.

If you should have any questions please do not hesitate to call me at 440-3414.

Sincerely;
Sue Ludwig

PART I

This part of the survey is designed to provide general information. Please read each question carefully and mark an X beside the proper category or clearly print your answer.

1. Current City/Town of residence:____

2. Age:__________________

3. Relationship Status: Currently living with partner_________ Currently separated_________ Number of years in above relationship_____________
If separated, for how long______________________________________

4. Number of children____

5. Ethnic Origin:____

6. Level of Violence at time of Incident(s)
    insulted/swore________________
    emotional abuse___________________________
    threats___________________________________
    physical violence_______________ please describe_____________________
    ____

Please rate the following statements according to how well each statement describes your experiences with the justice system and how well you coped using the guideline provided.	1. doesn't apply to me at all. 2. applies to me a little. 3. applies to me quite a bit. 4. applies to me extremely well.
Issues With the Justice System:	
1. Charges against my husband were dropped because I could not attend court.	1 2 3 4
2. I was told that continued harassment by my husband was a family matter because he has access to the children.	1 2 3 4
3. My lawyer informed me that his first responsibility was to the judge and then to the client.	1 2 3 4
4. His lawyer manages to delay court hearings causing me to return to court frequently and increasing my lawyer fees.	1 2 3 4
5. There is too long of a delay in getting a peace bond.	1 2 3 4
6. The lawyers made an agreement out of court and therefore no conviction occurred (they plea bargained).	1 2 3 4
7. Important witnesses were not on the subpena list and therefore were not called.	1 2 3 4
8. He is not paying child support as ordered by the courts.	1 2 3 4
9. I cannot afford to go to court to seek child support.	1 2 3 4
10. He hides his income (claimed bankruptcy/does not file correct income tax) and therefore does not pay adequate child support.	1 2 3 4

11. Judges don't take into account whether or not child support is made when granting visitation rights.	1 2 3 4
12. My lawyer doesn't care; doesn't listen to me.	1 2 3 4
13. I did not speak enough English to call the police or ask for help.	1 2 3 4
14. I had no idea about legal proceedings or legal aide.	1 2 3 4
15. A big obstacle to get charges laid is a lack of evidence, especially with emotional abuse.	1 2 3 4
16. He tried to get me charged with kidnapping when I took the kids to a shelter.	1 2 3 4
17. My victim impact statement was not read by the judge prior to sentencing, and therefore the sentence was too light.	1 2 3 4
18. Information is not coordinated between all professionals involved therefore information gets missed (ie: doctor's report not filed and could not be used as evidence).	1 2 3 4
19. I felt threatened, confused and intimidated by the court process.	1 2 3 4
20. The lawyer was able to work with me as an equal; a good relationship occurred.	1 2 3 4
21. The police did not take action on threats made by my husband.	1 2 3 4
22. My lawyer referred me to a group for abused women.	1 2 3 4
23. I was not aware of when he was being served with the divorce/legal papers. I was unable to make safety plans. He came to my house after being served and he was very angry.	1 2 3 4

24. The police knew my husband and therefore he wasn't charged.	1 2 3 4
25. The police tried to "buddy" with my husband and took him for coffee. They did not lay charges.	1 2 3 4
26. When I called the police did not show up.	1 2 3 4
27. I was afraid to call the police because I know them and am embarrassed.	1 2 3 4
28. Information between police is not passed on to the next shift or to other officers.	1 2 3 4
29. My husband abuses the children during visitations but because the child is too young to serve as a credible witness no action can be taken.	1 2 3 4
30. My husband was escorted back to the house by the police and he took his belongings plus other things needed by me and my children and he attacked me while the police were present.	1 2 3 4
31. The police did not lay charges until I showed them the bruises.	1 2 3 4
32. The police attended my call but my husband kept interfering while the police were there and I was too scared to pursue charges because he threatened me.	1 2 3 4
33. The judge didn't believe my story.	1 2 3 4
34. I didn't go to a doctor because no one told me to and therefore he was acquitted because of a lack of evidence.	1 2 3 4
35. In court we had an interpreter who interpreted for both sides and took his side. Each person should have their own interpreter.	1 2 3 4
36. The waiting period to go to court on abuse charges was too long and allowed for threats, harassment and further abuse to occur while I waited.	1 2 3 4

37. My own lawyer did not show up for court, another one did who was unfamiliar with my case.	1 2 3 4
38. I felt discrimination occurred by court officials.	1 2 3 4
39. Generally there's an attitude that is recognized by lawyers that the courts have a bias towards women that sees them as unintelligent, hysterical and exaggerating, therefore they are further victimized.	1 2 3 4
40. The clerk of the court who records information and judgements from the judge is sometimes careless, not enough attention is placed on some issues that could make a significant difference on the court orders (ie: they may miss a point that places the victim in danger).	1 2 3 4
41. The women are left with high legal bills due to the man's abuse.	1 2 3 4
42. My husband was a lawyer and therefore other lawyers and police were afraid to represent me.	1 2 3 4
43. My husband kidnapped the children. The police did not lay charges.	1 2 3 4
44. My husband and his friends locked me out of the house. If I left in front of witnesses that means I abandoned the house and children, and would lose the children, the house, everything.	1 2 3 4
45. The police have a gender bias to believe the man, especially if he is a professional.	1 2 3 4
46. His lawyer said I used cruelty in court and attempted to reverse things that made me look like the abuser.	1 2 3 4
47. I was told I was abusing the law due to frequent calls to the police.	1 2 3 4
48. My ex-husband threatened the police/lawyers with court action which scared them.	1 2 3 4

49. He had delayed maintenance support payments through delays in court hearings	1 2 3 4
50. His mental health was not taken into account by the judge because no assessment was done. He was mentally ill.	1 2 3 4
51. I was not asked by the judge to validate his story, was not allowed in the courtroom during his testimony. He lied on his affidavit. He perjured himself in court.	1 2 3 4
52. Not enough information was given to me, no one explained court procedures to me. I felt people were making decisions on my behalf without consulting me.	1 2 3 4
53. I needed to write up my own affidavits to save money and make sure important information was not left out.	1 2 3 4
54. My husband saw a psychologist who stated he was too depressed to work and therefore doesn't pay child support.	1 2 3 4
55. The judge granted him my car when he takes the children for visitations.	1 2 3 4
56. We trade the children at a police station because I have a restraining order and the police are rude and obnoxious and have told me they are not a babysitting service	1 2 3 4
57. A home assessment was ordered by a judge but the waiting period for these is too long and it can be delayed if both parties (and lawyers) don't agree on the same person.	1 2 3 4
58. My ex-husband used the Law Society as a method of abuse against me. Because my lawyer did a good job for me, he complained to the Law Society about my lawyer and they disciplined her. When I tried to intervene they told me I was irrelevant to the case.	1 2 3 4
59. I got the impression that the lawyer felt my case was trivial because no children were involved and little money was involved.	1 2 3 4

60. He was charged, arrested and convicted. His sentence was probation with no contact with me. He frequently breaches this and ends up back in court but there are no consequences.	1 2 3 4
61. Restraining orders are too costly because you need a lawyer and even if you get one the consequences of breaching it are negligible.	1 2 3 4
62. If the abuser gets time the sentence is too lenient and not accurate (ie: if he gets 6 months he only serves 2/3 time due to remission).	1 2 3 4
63. I was not informed of his release date from jail and could not make safety plans. The only time I could relax was when he was in jail, but I wasn't told when or if he got a temporary release from jail so I wasn't safe.	1 2 3 4
64. No follow-up has occurred following the court decisions. It should be mandatory for the man to get help and someone should ensure he follows through with court decisions.	1 2 3 4
65. I got a good response from the police.	1 2 3 4
66. The courts still minimize the seriousness of family violence. My husband did not go to jail, he only got $150.00 fine for beating me.	1 2 3 4
67. The crown prosecutor did not show up prior to court to meet with me; no one informed me what was happening.	1 2 3 4
68. I was so afraid I would do something wrong in court that would enable him to get off. The crown prosecutor could have briefed me about what to expect therefore alleviating that fear.	1 2 3 4
69. When we finally settled, the judge said he was being "generous" with child support and therefore he didn't have to backpay the support he owed for a year while waiting court settlement.	1 2 3 4

70. He has supervised visits with the children until after he has received counselling. He only went three times and now wants the supervision removed.	1 2 3 4
71. My ex-husband abused my lawyer. My lawyer didn't believe me until this occurred.	1 2 3 4
72. Legal aide only provides so much money which is not enough for abused women's needs.	1 2 3 4
73.I couldn't get a restraining order because he didn't hurt me bad enough.	1 2 3 4
74. He claimed bankruptcy and left me with the debts. Because I was married to him, I had to assume his debts.	1 2 3 4
75. I had no place to go to get away from him because I live in the country and there's no shelter nearby.	1 2 3 4
76. I had to go to court in a small town and everyone now knows about my marriage. I had to move to get away.	1 2 3 4
77. When I reported my husband was driving without a licence when he had the children, the police asked who I was, and then told me they don't get involved in family matters.	1 2 3 4
78. My husband pleaded guilty right away and got 2 years in jail for this.	1 2 3 4
79. My husband who beat me was a lawyer. The lawyer representing me took frequent phone calls and instruction from him.	1 2 3 4
80. My lawyer verbally abused me; he yelled and swore at me and told me not to make my husband angry.	1 2 3 4
81. My lawyer signed an affidavit that was not true.	1 2 3 4

82. I believe my lawyer recognized I was under duress, but he wasn't prepared to do anything about it. 1 2 3 4

83. I had no income, no one suggested legal aide, the lawyers were aware I couldn't fight very long in court. 1 2 3 4

84. Even though various lawyers did not act for me, they charged me for reading the file and would not return it until I payed. I had to give them a retainer of usually $1,000.00 that was not all returned. 1 2 3 4

85. My husband payed child support to his lawyer who passed it onto my lawyer who had to give it to legal aide because I owed money. 1 2 3 4

86. My lawyer told me to learn to live with the threats from my husband. 1 2 3 4

87. I have to travel to another province to go back to court and stay in hotels. Many court delays have cost me lots of money. 1 2 3 4

88. I fired my lawyer and he wouldn't give over my file to the new lawyer so we had to start all over again. 1 2 3 4

89. The day my husband went to court I had to sneak back into the house to get clothes for the kids. 1 2 3 4

90. The bruises from the beating were gone by the time we went to court and therefore there was no evidence. He got off with no conviction. 1 2 3 4

91. Women who need legal aide have to line up at 6 or 7 am and hope to get their case heard that day. This is hard when it's cold and you have to take your kids along (often on the bus). There's no where to leave them. 1 2 3 4

92. I had to threaten to take my lawyer to the Law Society before he would return my phone calls or get back to me. 1 2 3 4

93. If you go to mediation with the man it's torture because you can't 1 2 3 4

say anything. The woman is intimidated and controlled while he is present.	
94. I didn't have enough notice to go to court.	1 2 3 4
95. The police could not help me when he was harassing me because I didn't have a restraining order; I couldn't afford one.	1 2 3 4
96. In order to get maintenance enforcement set up I had to provide them with information like his social insurance number. He hid this information from me.	1 2 3 4
97. My ex-husband phoned maintenance enforcement telling them we had got back together. They were going to close the file. I needed to prove to them we were still separated.	1 2 3 4
98. When I reported to child welfare that my children's health was being affected when they went to visit their father, they said they could not act because it was a custody suit.	1 2 3 4
Coping	
1. I want to leave the city to escape the abuse.	1 2 3 4
2. I cry a lot.	1 2 3 4
3. Coping is hard; I don't cope.	1 2 3 4
4. I borrow money from parents to feed the kids.	1 2 3 4
5. I feel constantly frustrated.	1 2 3 4
6. I hide, I'm embarrassed, I don't want people to know I'm abused.	1 2 3 4
7. I can't sleep.	1 2 3 4
8. I needed to quit school/job to cope, I could not cope with additional stress.	1 2 3 4

9. My children get physically ill.	1 2 3 4
10. I live in constant fear.	1 2 3 4
11. I went to a shelter and then to a second stage housing. This helped a lot.	1 2 3 4
12. I talked to friends.	1 2 3 4
13. I went to a group; found talking to others in the same situation helpful, healing occurred through sharing.	1 2 3 4
14. I moved in with my parents for protection.	1 2 3 4
15. I get angry at the system.	1 2 3 4
16. I feel very stressed.	1 2 3 4
17. I made safety plans with the help of others.	1 2 3 4
18. I coped by closing everything up inside of me.	1 2 3 4
19. I coped by giving it back to him-mainly verbal abuse.	1 2 3 4
20. I thought of suicide as a way out.	1 2 3 4
21. I needed to take sleeping pills.	1 2 3 4
22. I coped through counselling.	1 2 3 4
23. I used prayers to cope.	1 2 3 4
24. Financial support is very important. The women need a trust fund for financial assistance to bridge them over.	1 2 3 4
25. The cruelty, mind games leave one with no self-esteem.	1 2 3 4

I get very depressed.	1	2	3	4
27. My kids, school, job keep me going.	1	2	3	4
28. The consistence offered by the spousal violence follow-up teams was helpful.	1	2	3	4
29. I have a domestic violence emergency response system that I rely on for protection.	1	2	3	4
30. I still have hope for the future.	1	2	3	4
31. I needed prescription drugs for depression and anxiety.	1	2	3	4
32. I coped by becoming numb, not feeling.	1	2	3	4
33. We all sleep in one room with the drapes drawn, and doors latched.	1	2	3	4
34. I hide at the lake when I can afford it.	1	2	3	4
35. I coped by keeping in touch with the police; the police became familiar with my case.	1	2	3	4
36. I coped better when the police informed me of his whereabouts.	1	2	3	4
37. I went to the Law Society to report my lawyer.	1	2	3	4
38. I bought a dog for protection.	1	2	3	4
39. I ate a lot.	1	2	3	4
40. I feel I'm going insane.	1	2	3	4
41. I thought of killing him to end the abuse.	1	2	3	4
42. My kids withdrew and my oldest has got violent with her sisters. She even wrote a suicide letter.	1	2	3	4

43. I coped by going back to him and I tried not to upset him.	1	2	3	4
44. I coped through finding out information for myself. I searched the libraries to see if I had a case.	1	2	3	4
45. I never bank on winning for an outcome.	1	2	3	4
46. I relied on my own abilities; I planned a life without him.	1	2	3	4
47. I am over-cautious now.	1	2	3	4
48. I started to save all information from courts, lawyers, etc, and I photocopied everything.	1	2	3	4
49. I got involved in advocating for abused women.	1	2	3	4
50. I cope by writing in a journal, it helps me reflect.	1	2	3	4
51. I get sick frequently.	1	2	3	4
52. I read books about abused women to get a better understanding.	1	2	3	4
53. It hurt to have to tell my kids that their dad got off charges because they were there, they saw the attack.	1	2	3	4
54. I dropped all court charges, it was easier to live with him again and know what he was up to.	1	2	3	4
55. I would have coped better if the police had laid charges.	1	2	3	4
56. It helped me to cope when the police removed him from the house.	1	2	3	4
57. It would have helped me if he had spent some time in jail.	1	2	3	4
58. My doctor helped me, I talked to him.	1	2	3	4

59. My friends and family did a lot of judging and made me feel responsible.	1 2 3 4

APPENDIX E

Sort Completed by the Group Of 8 to 10 Women

Sort Completed by 8 to 10 Women Who Attend a Group for Abused Women

Issues or Experiences

Cluster 1: Police, Real Crappy
5. There is too long of a delay in getting a peace bond.
47. I was told I was abusing the law due to frequent phone calls to the police.
94. I had to threaten to take my lawyer to the Law Society before he would return my phone calls or get back to me.
68. I was so afraid I would do something wrong in court that would enable him to get off. The crown prosecutor could have briefed me about what to expect therefore alleviating that fear.
43. My husband kidnapped the children. The police did not lay charges.
89. The day my husband went to court I had to sneak back into the house to get clothes for the kids.
77. When I reported my husband was driving without a licence when he had the children, the police asked who I was, and then told me they don't get involved in family matters.
32. The police attended my call but my husband kept interfering while the police were there and I was too scared to pursue charges because he threatened me.
56. We trade children at a police station because I have a restraining order and the police are rude and obnoxious and have told me they are not a babysitting service.
45. The police have a gender bias to believe the man, especially if he is a professional.
31. The police did not lay charges until I showed them the bruises.
34. I didn't go to a doctor because no on told me to and therefore he was acquitted because of a lack of evidence.
28. Information between the police is not passed on to the next shift or to other officers.

30. My husband was escorted back to the house by the police and he took his belongings plus other things needed by me and my children and he attacked me while the police were present.

24. The police knew my husband and therefore he wasn't charged.

26. When I called the police did not show up.

21. The police did not take action on threats made by my husband.

25. The police tried to "buddy" with my husband and took him for coffee. They did not lay charges.

2. I was told that continued harassment by my husband was a family matter because he has access to the children.

Cluster 2: Lack of Justice/Unfairness

98. When I reported to child welfare that my children's health was being affected when they went to visit their father, they said they could not act because it was a custody suit.

Cluster 3: Inadequate Laws

64. No follow-up has occurred following court decisions. It should be mandatory for the man to get help and someone should ensure he follows through with court decisions.

62. If the abuser gets time the sentence is too lenient and not accuarte (ie: if he gets 6 months he only serves 2/3 time due to remissions).

63. I was not informed of his release date from jail and could not make safety plans. The only time I could relax was when he was in jail, but I wasn't told when or if he got a temporary release from jail so I wasn't safe.

73. I couldn't get a restraining order because he didn't hurt me bad enough.

74. He claimed bankruptcy and left me with the debts. Because I was married to him, I had to assume his debts.

36. The waiting period to go to court on abuse charges was too long and allowed for threats, harassment and further abuse to occur while I waited.

Cluster 4: **Police/Financial Legal**

41. The women are left with high legal bills due to the man's abuse.

95. The police could not help me when he was harassing me because I didn't have a restraining order; I couldn't afford one.

Cluster 5: **Intimidation/Legal**

16. He tried to get me charged with kidnapping when I took the kids to a shelter.

15. A big obstacle to get charges laid is a lack of evidence, especially with emotional abuse.

19.I felt threatened, confused and intimidated by the court process.

93. If you go to mediation with the man it's torture because you can't say anything. The woman is intimidated and controlled while he is present.

84.Even though various lawyers did not act for me, they charged me for reading the file and would not return it until I payed. I had to give them a retainer of usually $1,000.00 that was not all returned.

86. My lawyer told me to learn to live with threats from my husband.

42. My husband was a lawyer and therefore other lawyers and police were afraid to represent me.

58. My ex-husband used to Law Society as a method of abuse against me. Because my lawyer did a good job for me, he complained to the Law Society about my lawyer and they disciplined her. When I tried to intervene they told me I was irrelevant to the case.

48. My ex-husband threatened the police/lawyers with court action which scared them.

76. I had to go to court in a small town and everyone now knows about my marriage. I had to move to get away.

35. In court we had an interpreter who interpreted for both sides and took his side. Each person should hve their own interpreter.

27. I was afraid to call the police because I know them an am embarrassed.
4. Hi lawyer manages to delay court hearings causing me to return to court frequently and increasing my lawyer fees.
Cluster 6: Lack of Community Support
75. I had no place to go to get away from him because I live in the country and there's no shelter nearby.
Cluster 7: Poor Legal Services for People Without Money
72. Legal aid only provides so much money which is not enough for abused women's needs.
83. I had no income, no one suggested legal aid, the lawyers were aware I couldn't fight very long in court.
85. My husband payed child support to his lawyer who passed it onto my lawyer who had to give it to legal aid because I owed money.
87. I have to travel to another province to go back to court and stay in hotels. Many court delays have cost me lots of money.
91. Women who need leal aid have to line up at 6 or 7 am and hope to get their case heard that day. This is hard when it's cold and you have to take your kids along (often on the bus). There's no where to leave them.
61. Restraining orders are too costly because you need a lawyer to get one and even if you get one the consequences of breaching it are negligible.
Cluster 8: Positive Supports
20. The lawyer was able to work with me as an equal; a good relationship occurred.
65. I got a good response from the police.
22. My lawyer referred me to a group for abused women.
Cluster 9: Lousy Lawyers

3. My lawyer informed me that his first responsibility was to the judge and then to the client.

86. My lawyer told me to learn to live with the threats from my husband.

37. My own lawyer did not show up for court, another one did who was unfamiliar with my case.

39. Generally there's an attitude that is recognized by lawyers that the courts have a bias towards women that sees them as unintelligent, hysterical and exaggerating, therefore they are further victimized.

6. The lawyers made an agreement out of court and therefore no conviction occurred (they plea bargained).

46. His lawyer said I used cruelty in court and attempted to reverse things that made me look like the abuser.

59. I got the impression that the lawyer felt my case was trivial because no children were involved and little money was involved.

80. My lawyer verbally abused me; he yelled and swore at me and told me not to make my husband angry.

82. I believe my lawyer recognized I was under duress, but he wasn't prepared to do anything about it.

79. My husband who beat me was a lawyer. The lawyer representing me took frequent phone calls and instruction from him.

88. I fired my lawyer and he wouldn't give over my file to the new lawyer so we had to start all over again.

92. I had to threaten to take my lawyer to the Law Society before he would return my phone calls or get back to me.

81. My lawyer signed an affidavit that was not true.

71. My ex-husband abused my lawyer. My lawyer didn't believe me until this occurred.

12. My lawyer doesn't care; doesn't listen to me.

Cluster 10: **Maintenance Issues**
69. When we finally settled, the judge said he was being "generous" with child support and therefore he didn't have to backpay the support he owed for a year while waiting court settlement.
97. My ex-husband phoned maintenance enforcement telling them we had got back together. They were going to close the file. I needed to prove to them we were still separated.
96. In order to get maintenance enforcement set up I had to provide them with information like his social insurance number. He hid this information from me.
54. My husband saw a psychologist who stated that he was too depressed to work and therefore he doesn't pay child support.
49. He had delayed maintenance support payments through delays in court hearings.
11. Judges don't take into account whether or not child support is made when granting visitation rights.
10. He hides his income (claimed bankruptcy/does not file correct income tax) and therefore does not pay adequate child support.
8. He is not paying child support as ordered by the courts.
Cluster 11: **Inadequate Court Services**
51. I was not asked by the judge to validate his story, was not allowed in the courtroom during his testimony. He lied on his affidavit. He perjured himself in court.
60. He was charged, arrested and convicted. His sentence was probation with no contact with me. He frequently breaches this and ends up back in court but there are no consequences.

40. The clerk of the court who records information and judgements from the judge is sometimes careless, not enough attention is placed on some issues that could make a significant difference on the court orders (ie: they may miss a point that places the victim in danger).

38. I felt discrimination occurred by court officials.

7. Important witnesses were not on the subpena list and therefore were not called.

17. My victim impact statement was not read by the judge prior to sentencing, and therefore the sentence was too light.

66. The courts still minimize the seriousness of family violence. My husband did not go to jail, he only got $150.00 for beating me.

57. A home assessment was ordered by a judge but the waiting period for these is too long and it can be dealyed if both parties (and lawyers) don't agree on the same person.

50. His mental health was not taken into account by the judge because no assessment was done. He was mentally ill.

78. My husband pleaded guilty right away and got 2 years in jail for this.

94. I didn't have enough notice to go to court.

Cluster 12: Lousy Judge

55. The judge granted him my car when he takes the children for visitations.

Cluster 13: Gaps in the System

13. I did not speak enough English to call the police or ask for help.

14. I had no idea about legal proceedings or legal aid.

18. Information is not coordinated between all professional involved therefore information gets missed (ie: doctor's report not filed and could not be used as evidence).

23. I was not aware of when he was being served with the divorce/legal papers. I was unable to make safety plans. He came to my house after being served and he was very angry.

29. My husband abused the children during visitations but because the child is too young to serve as a credible witness no action can be taken.

33. The judge didn't believe my story.

44. My husband and his friends locked me out of the house. If I left in front of witnesses that means I abandonded the house and children, and would lose the children, the house, everything.

67. The crown prosecutor did not show up prior to court to meet with me; no one informed me what was happening.

70. He has supervised visits with the children until after he has received counselling. He only went three times and now wants the supervision removed.

1. Charges against my husband were dropped because I could not attend court.

52. Not enough information was given to me, no one explained court procedure to me. I felt people were making decisions on my behalf without consulting me.

Coping

Cluster 1: Spiritual Coping Self Help

14. I moved in with my parents for protection.

48. I started to save all information from courts, lawyers, etc, and I photocopied everything.

30. I still have hope for the furture.

12. I talked to friends.

23. I used prayers to cope.

1. I want to leave the city to escape the abuse.

17. I made safety plans with the help of others.

49. I got involved in advocating for abused women.

52. I read books about abused women to get a bettere understanding.

46. I relied on my own abilities; I planned a life without him.

38. I bought a dog for protection.

44. I coped through finding out infromation for myself. I searched the libraries to see if I had a case.

Cluster 2: Self Injury

31. I needed prescription drugs for depression and anxiety.

21. I needed to take sleeping pills.

20. I thought of suicide as a way out.

15. I get angry at the system.

Cluster 3: Not Coping

47. I am over cautious now.

7. I can't sleep.

8. I needed to quit school/job to cope, I could not cope with additional stress.

33. We all sleep in one room with the drapes drawn, and doors latched.

10. I live in constant fear.

25. The cruelty, mind games leave one with no self-esteem.

40. I feel I'm going insane.

45. I never bank on winning for an outcome.

42. My kids withdrew and my oldest has got violent with her sisters. She even wrote a suicide letter.

53. I hurt to have to tell my kids that their dad got off charges because they were there, they saw the attack.

9. My children get physically ill.

26. I get very depressed.

59. My friends and family did a lot of judging and made me feel responsible.

16. I feel very stressed.

5. I feel constantly frustrated.

2. I cry a lot.

3. Coping is hard: I dont' cope.

4. I borrow money from parents to feed the kids.

Cluster 4: **Retaliation**

19. I coped by giving it back to him-mainly verbal abuse.

41. I thought of killing him to end the abuse.

55. I would have coped better if the police had laid charges.

57. It would have helped me cope if he had spent some time in jail.

Cluster 5: **Keep Busy**

27. My kids, school, job keep me going.

50. I cope by writing in a journal, it helps me reflect.

Cluster 6: **Using Other Resources**

13. I went to a group; found talking to others in the same situation helpful, healing occurred through sharing.

22. I coped through counselling.

28. The consistency offered by the spousal violence follow-up teams was helpful.

56. It helped me cope when the police removed him from the house.

35. I coped by keeping in touch with the police; the police became familiar with my case.

36. I coped better when the police informed me of his whereabouts.

24. Financial support is very important. The women need a trust fund for financial assistance to bridge them over.

11. I went to a shelter and then to a second stage housing. This helped a lot.

37. I want to the Law Society to report my lawyer.
14. I moved in with my parents for protection.
58. My doctor helped me, I talked to him.
29. I have a domestic violence emergency response system that I rely on for protection.
Cluster 7: Denial
34. I hide a the lake when I can afford it.
18. I coped by closing everything up inside of me.
32. I coped by becoming numb, not feeling.
54. I dropped all court charges, it was easier to live with him again and know what he was up to.
43. I coped by going back to him and I tried not to upset him.
6. I hide, I'm embarrassed, I don't want people to know I'm abused.